

DAVID IVON JONES: THE EARLY WRITINGS ON SOCIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

David Ivon Jones left his native Wales and sailed to New Zealand in search of a cure for tuberculosis in 1907. But, although he found companions, he was restless, and moved to South Africa. He arrived in November 1910, and spent the first six months working for his two brothers in the Orange Free State. He then went to the Witwatersrand, working initially for a third brother, and then, having learnt typing and book-keeping, obtained a clerical job at the VFP (Transvaal and Victoria Falls Power Company) that supplied power for the mines.

There was little in his first few years in South Africa to indicate that he would become the leading revolutionary in the country. He was intensely religious, and belonged to the Unitarian faith — the chapels of which had a history of radical involvement in Wales. Although Jones probably inclined towards the position of the Independent Labour Party (of Great Britain), his political philosophy was a mix of Welsh nationalism, admiration for the Welsh Liberal leader, David Lloyd George, and admiration for the Boers, because of their stand against the British in the war of 1899-1902. He joined the South African Labour Party (SALP) in 1911 or 1912, accepting the segregationist outlook of that party.

Ivon Jones was a remarkable man, but his story might have been of little interest if it had not been for the events of July 1913 and January 1914, when white workers confronted the government of Botha and Smuts in two general strikes. In the first strike, which centered around the demands of the white miners for a shorter working day as a protection against phthisis, Smuts called in the Dragoons, the British regiment stationed in the Transvaal, and they shot down a peaceful demonstration in Johannesburg. This led to widespread riots, in which the offices of the *Star* newspaper and the central railway station were burnt down. The second strike, called by the railwaymen, was probably engineered by Smuts in order to smash the trade union movement.

As a result of these two strikes, a group inside the leadership of the Labour party was radicalised. When the First World War

broke out, the same group adopted an anti-war stance on pacifist grounds. At this time Jones, who was now a Tolstoyan, was secretary of the SALP. The anti-warites controlled the executive of the SALP, but under Creswell, the majority of the party resolved to support the war. This led to a split. Jones, together with S.P. Bunting, W.H. Andrews, Colin Wade, and others formed the International Socialist League.

One of the first steps the new League took was to call for the organization of black workers, and for a united working class movement. This led in 1917 to the formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa, a black organization which, it was hoped, would provide a nucleus for black industrial unionization. Ivon Jones played a significant part in many of the activities of the ISL. He was its secretary, and editor of its journal, the *International*; he was one of the leading proponents of bringing blacks into the League; he alone seemed to grasp the significance of the first revolution in Russia in February/March 1917, and by October he was a convinced Bolshevik.

In March 1919 he resigned his posts, owing to ill health, and went to Natal. There he was offered work in Mozambique where he contracted malaria. He was in a sanatorium in Pietermaritzburg when, together with L.H. Greene, he wrote the leaflet 'The Bolsheviks are Coming'. This led to arrest, and the imposition of a gaol sentence which was reversed on appeal. He left South Africa to go home to Aberystwyth, but stopped at Nice, sorely ill, and was tended by old-time acquaintances from the Unitarian chapel in Wales. He contacted the local socialist group, and wrote a report on Communism in South Africa. It is said that he met Karl Radek, and was invited to go to Moscow to attend the Third Congress of the Communist International and the Founding Conference of the Red International of Labour Unions. He was appointed consultative delegate for (all!) Africa to the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

Jones wrote a vast number of articles — most of them unknown to contemporary readers. We believe that they should be publicised, and although the reader today might find some of the ideas strange, and will probably consider some wrong, they are often remarkably farsighted. In an article in *Communist International*, October 1922, that is too long to include in this issue, Jones said of the 1922 strike that it had lessons for the world working class, because:

(1) It presents us with the problem of colour prejudice within the ranks of the workers in its acutest form, there, where the conditions for its solution are already maturing.

(2) It is the first great armed revolt of the workers on any scale in the British Empire

(3) It presents one of the most striking examples of the use of the aeroplane as the supreme capitalist weapon against the workers, and suggests serious problems for the military mechanics of revolution.

(4) It is a victory for Imperialist capital, on the one hand extending its tenure of life by expansion, on the other hand performing a revolutionary role by drawing in still wider masses of the backward peoples into the world movement.

Even where Jones was wrong, his insights are illuminating. His errors arose partly from over-optimism. Believing that the revolution was not far away, he saw the white worker playing a decisive role. Some of the debates that led to this position can be found in the few pieces we have reprinted below.

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THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF AFRICA (IWA)

In explaining its reasons for concentrating on the organization of black workers, the ISL declared in the International, 22 February 1918. that the League was not pro-Colour, but pro-working class:

We give increasing attention to the native workers not because they are natives but because they are workers. Correspondents who send us notes on coloured and native grievances ... should note this. We are not concerned with the civil disabilities of Indian storekeepers or native lawyers or coloured middle men. For us they all belong to the parasitic class. Our concern with the natives and our faith in them is our concern in them as workers, as potentially the revolutionary proletariat.

We are pro-workingclass, not pro-native. Constituting as they do the big majority of those who do the work of the country, we want the native workers to realise that it is their historic

mission to bring about the emancipation of Labour. Everything is marking time for them. We also want the white workers to realise this.

In line with this declaration Ivon Jones drafted the leaflet that was translated into Zulu and Sotho (ironically, by two policemen on the IWA committee who had been sent in as spies). The English version reprinted on 15 February 1918 in the *International* reads:

WORKERS OF THE BANTU RACE! Why do you live in slavery? Why are you not free? Why are you kicked and spat upon by your masters? Why must you carry a pass before you can move anywhere? And if you are found without one, why are you thrown into prison? Why do you toil hard for little money? And again thrown into prison if you refuse to work. Why do they herd you like cattle into compounds, **WHY?**

Because you are the toilers of the earth. Because the masters want you to labour for their profit. Because they pay the Government and the Police to keep you as slaves to toil for them.

If it were not for the money that they make from your labour, you would not be oppressed.

But mark! You are the mainstay of the country. You do all the work, you are the means of their living.

That is why you are robbed of the fruits of your labour and robbed of our liberty as well.

There is only one way of deliverance for you, Bantu workers. Unite as workers, unite! Forget the things that divide you. Let there be no longer talk of Basuto, Zulu, or Shangaan. You are all labourers. Let Labour be your common bond.

Wake up! And open your ears. The sun has arisen, the day is breaking. For a long time you were asleep when the great mill of the rich man was grinding and breaking the sweat from your work for nothing. You are strongly urged to come to the meeting of the workers and fight for your rights. Come and listen to the good news and deliver yourself from the chains of the Capitalists. Unity is strength. The fight is great against the many pass laws that persecute you, and the low wages and the misery of existence. Workers of all lands unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win.

Ten thousand copies were printed and, at an IWA meeting of 25 October, Jones advised those who distributed it to proceed secretly and with caution. At subsequent meetings it was reported that bundles were given to friends, and distributed in

Pretoria, Rustenberg, in the mine compounds and across the Witwatersrand.

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The only other leaflet of the IWA is of interest because it was written by T.W. Thibedi, one of the first Africans to join the ISL.

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF AFRICA

1 This Native Council is for all those who call themselves Country Workers. Black African open your eyes, the time has come for you all who call themselves Country Workers that you should join and become members of your own Council. It is not to say that we workers stop you from joining any other Councils, but you must know what you are in the Country for (rich or poor). All workers are poor therefore they should have their own Council.

2 Item 1: Friend are you not a worker?

Item 2: Is it not true that we Black People do every work in the country?

Item 3: If so why do you not become a member of the Industrial Workers of Africa?

Item 4: Why should all workers be pressed down by the rich where of they all do the work of the Country?

Item 5: Why should you be kicked and spat at whilst working.

Item 6: How is it that you black workers asking for bread from the Government as their children, are arrested and sent to gaol?

Item 7: O! Oh! Workers your children died in German East Africa and West. Others were drowned in the sea. Upon that you are still burdened and compelled to carry 100 (hundred) Passes in your father's country.

Item 8: Workers come together and be united and join your own Native Council. Why are you afraid to become members of the Industrial Workers of Africa whilst you call yourself Workers?

Send your news and your adresses to:-

T.W. THIBEDI

P.O. Box 2972, JOHANNESBURG.

We have also found the record by an informer of objectives of the IWA as read by the secretary.

Objects: To find a better way of living and to inspire the true essence of unity; to meet together periodically to discuss matters of social and general interest to mutual

improvement; to organise the members and to do without the Capitalists

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WHITE WORKERS OR BLACK WORKERS?

[In April 1919, a debate on the Johannesburg 'Soviet' inside the ISL was conducted through the pages of the *International*, that was to have far reaching effects on the thinking of members of the League. In most respects S.P. Bunting was correct in his interpretation of events, although his conclusion (on returning Africans to the land after the 'revolution') is patently absurd. The debate was to reverberate through the communist ranks in the years to come and needs to be known by all those interested in the development of ideas.]

S.P. Bunting initiated the debate on 4 April 1919, under the heading

The White Soviet and the Red Herring

Last Tuesday the Power Station and Tramway men on strike in Johannesburg endorsed, rather than appointed, a white workers' 'Board of Control' to carry out in place of the self-confessedly 'impotent' Town Council, the administration of the Municipal services. This Board at once resumed the tram, light and power supply, leaving it to events to determine whether and when it could abdicate in favour of the old Council, how and when it would assist the other striking workers, and how it would resist the inevitable 'counter revolution' of the bourgeoisie and Government.

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.

The Board might well have dropped its middle class talk of 'the public' or the 'community' (i.e. society considered as a capitalist organization, and the individuals supporting it as such) and its aping of official 'obedient servant' style (as if all it wanted was Botha's job), and recognised its mission as a pioneer, however imperfect, in familiarising us all with the

idea of the necessary dictatorship of the proletariat leading to a complete Socialist Commonwealth.

But that recognition would have revealed to our would-be 'Soviet' how very far behind that objective it had halted. In the first place, it could not pretend to be even a White Workers' Council for Johannesburg. It represented at best only organised Municipal workers: the organised workers of private industries were not invited to send their delegates by virtue of whose presence alone it could have begun to call itself a body representative of the workers of the Municipal area. Secondly, it did not succeed in calling into being any corresponding Council outside Johannesburg proper: it has been brought, for the present at least to a standstill in that town, whereas the essence of the movement requires that it should be constantly spreading. On the contrary, it has announced itself as only a temporary institution, though perhaps intending to be taken in the same sense as the Great Powers who announce their occupation of Egypt, for instance, or the seizure of Chinese Customs, as only temporary measures to secure certain demands. Finally, some of its spokesmen disclaimed for it any but advisory powers — the inevitable result of trying, as Labour members of Parliament are also limited to doing, to justify anti-capitalist acts by capitalist standards and to pro-capitalist audiences.

But what is far more fundamental is its glaring 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 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' suggest all-powerful directors, not communists, and 'control' of any except non-workers is not the meaning of Bolshevism.

The ISL, having had as such no part in the remarkable if somewhat theatrical doings of the Strike Committees in the last few days, can fitly 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 oppressed 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 and 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 that, 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 cost of living, of any increased wage to these toiling, sweating slaves? Against their suppression in compounds and locations, the frauds practiced on them by the Department supposed to protect them but really protecting their bosses' interests, the instinctive bullying of them by the police, against their wholesale arrest, against the Kaffir Pogrom policy of the Government? Granted that when offered arms in accordance with this policy by Mr. Macfie [the magistrate who sentenced the 'sanitary boys'] the strikers demurred to signing on blindly in the Defence Force; yet the above resolution, which only renews the Federation's negotiations for arming Trade Unionist anti-native worker battalions last July, is such a dastardly piece of scabbery on the mass of proletarians of this country — and at best no organised working class should ever offer any assistance to any capitalist government — that we are more than justified in ridiculing the pretensions of any labour movement, and most of all a labour movement calling itself 'revolutionary', which in either its initial or its subsequent stages presumes to proceed without the proletariat. (In fairness be it said that the bodies that breathe these anti-native threats are the same that have dissociated themselves from the Board of Control, the South African Industrial Federation appearing to be their inspiration).

As this paper has often pointed out, the capitalist class see the point and seize the opportunity. It is a god send to them that a native strike is running simultaneously with the white one. As long as they can count on the middle-class obsessions of white workers who want a revolution merely to instal themselves in command of the subject race, they are quite safe. While the orator shouts 'Workers of the world unite', someone whispers 'the Kaffirs are rising' — oh, then, presto, let's bury the hatchet with our baases [masters], who will give us guns instead to shoot their slaves with. It is to this bourgeois call and bourgeois workers' responses more even to South African Industrial Federation sabotage as such ...that we must ascribe the insufficient success of Johannesburg's first attempt at practical Bolshevism... [In an aside Bunting said that 'it is after all only an aristocrats' revolution, an affair of the Court as it were, and thus only prolongs the struggle of classes'].

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. And as it is only labour, organised and solid, that can break up capitalism, all prejudices, all homage to middle-class respectability or newspaper commendation in the name of the 'public' or the 'community', must be sunk in order to achieve that organization and solidarity of South African Labour. Anything less will produce no victory at all, rather it will help the other side: certainly no victory of the very workers and peasants to whom

Once the victory is won, the scene will no doubt change. The outstanding characteristic of the Socialist system in South Africa will certainly not be its native wage labour. The first great act of any proletarian revolution having secured political control is to restore the land to the people; in particular to those who work on it. And again, no revolution will tolerate the exploitation of the labour to a subject race — Russia renounced its exploitation of China and Persia in the first week of its communist revolution. On the basis of these two postulates a South African Socialist Republic will, until strong enough to appropriate all land, at any rate recreate the homes of the native workers, by lavishing energy, science, machinery and every sort of aid on building up the Communist agriculture, in the first instance in the divers native territories, later over wider and choicer areas, until it becomes possible for any community, more particularly if black, to live there a free, prosperous, educated and self-respecting life, unharassed by taxation, poverty, pass laws, native land laws, private landowning, Native Affairs Departments, spies, police and other enemies of the natives, or any inducement or compulsion to go to work for wages: on the contrary, a life made as attractive as it can be, a life in model self-governing communities which will retain all they produce, or even produce more than they need retain and so supply the whole country's foodstuffs.

Immediate expropriation will make good any deficiency of land in the existing areas, leaving complete expropriation for later attention. Incidentally the Creswellian embargo on imported indentured labour will of course take shape. In this way the cheap labour basis of industry will forthwith be undermined, and the white man's fear of being undercut will dwindle away as he realises that under a Socialist system of food, shelter, clothing, education and culture for all, of whatever race, willing to work, there can be no such thing as being undercut — except in the case of those whose only idea of work is to make others work for them. That is the solution to the 'native problem'.

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On 11 April, Jones responded with a defence of white workers, and provided the argument for relying on these forces. His predictions of early proletarian dictatorship must be read in terms of the optimism in leftist groups in the wake of the Russian revolution. What is important was his pointing to the white workers as the motive force of the coming struggle, and in this he erred sorely. On the other hand he made short shrift of Bunting's rural utopianism.

The White Workers' 'Burden'

There is a danger of allowing assumptions, to crystallise. How much harder is it to unlearn than to learn! It has often been repeated by us that the revolution is more backward here in South Africa than elsewhere, because of the 'backward races'. That may be so with regard to the consolidation of the revolution. But its effect may be the reverse upon the conquest of political dictatorship.

Here (sic) are two distinct phases in the revolution. Long after the November 7th Revolution, that is, after the conquest of political dictatorship by the Russian proletariat, Lenin warned the Russian people that they were yet a long way from being revolutionary.

In theory it is pernicious to divide the proletariat, and our propaganda is ever towards the idea of solidarity irrespective of colour. But the fact is, that as a result of the colour line, there is a sharp division of function between the white and black workers.

Contrary to common assumptions, skilled labour in South Africa can as a rule paralyse industry more effectively than in white countries because of the native proletariat. We will see how.

Industry today requires a high average standard of intelligence. In South Africa the skilled trades are in fairly good demand compared to the supply. In white countries the gradation from the highly skilled down to the lowest unskilled descends by imperceptible stages. Even among the

unskilled there are large numbers of workers of high intelligence. In the ranks of these the employing class have a weapon against the skilled trades. There is no clear cut line as in South Africa. Hence the skilled trades in white countries are economically far weaker than in a country like ours.

We are too apt to think of the white workers in terms of mining. In the mines the white worker is generally a ganger [a petty contractor]. But follow him to the other trades, carpenters, fitters, bricklayers — here the native labourer does about the same work as a fitter's or carpenter's labourer or hodman in Europe. But go further to tramwaymen and railwaymen. Instead of the proportion of ten to one as on the mines, here the native workers are about equal to whites, while on the running staffs there are hardly any natives.

The presence of this big gap in function (not in the interest) between the bulk of the white and the native workers renders the white proletariat master of the *political* situation, using 'political' in the broad Marxian sense. This is the only section of the proletariat as yet politically articulate.

The position then is this: The white workers can themselves win political dictatorship for the proletariat. But, as has been well said, *unless within twenty-four hours after the revolution the whole proletariat experiences the joyousness of freedom* (even though hungry), the revolution fails. And the immediate work of the revolution must be to bring out in freedom the latent possibilities of the native workers, arousing their co-operation in the work of construction, and making them partners through education and emulation in the great work of consolidating the revolution and forming their very own Commonwealth of Labour.

To get the economic machine to run again the white workers are wholly dependent upon their native fellow workers. In the hour of collapse they will pretty soon realise the fact. And here our fact will fall in line with our theory — the working class becomes one, knowing no demarcation of colour.

It is only on this view that we can account for the fact, that Reform Socialism and Mugwump Labour, so strong yet in white countries, are so bankrupt in South Africa. We often say that the white worker is himself an exploiter. If this were essentially true, we should expect a strong middle party of Labour on the political field. But such a movement has only transient success simply because the white worker is only superficially an exploiter, only transiently conservative. The difference in industrial function makes him appear to be an exploiter only to hasty observers. An exploiter renders no service. Skilled wage labour that requires the aid of unskilled wage labour is exploited labour none the less for its supervisory duties.

There may be many accidents accounting for an economic interest being almost unreflected or badly reflected in the political field. But what is to account for the fact that no propaganda, no line of action except the

revolutionary one seems to fit the bill in industrial South Africa? Where is the Single Tax, where Liberal Labourism? It has a town club provided by capitalist friends.

The only way to account for this is by the assumption that the white proletariat is a revolutionary factor, it is the engine of revolution in South Africa, just as the comparatively small industrial proletariat of Russia steered the big mass of the Russian people into the Soviet Republic.

It may also be said that the native workers are ultimately the true revolutionists, with potentialities undeveloped, and that the clarity of the class struggle here is really due to their mass psychology. Be it so. The working class is interdependent. And we have only put the matter in other words. The moral therefore is: while not abating our cry for unity of the proletariat, white and black, let us not slide into the false idea of Unity which sneers at either section of the proletariat. For that is to be anti-proletarian in the below-zero direction.

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In March 1919 David Ivon Jones and L.H. Greene were arrested for distributing a leaflet entitled 'The Bolsheviks are Coming', and charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act — because their action was calculated to 'alarm and excite public feeling, and for contravening the Moratorium Act by not transmitting the leaflet to the Chief Censor, Cape Town. The offending leaflet was reprinted on 25 April 1919 in the *International* between the pictures of Lenin and Trotsky.

THE BOLSHEVIKS ARE COMING

To the Workers of South Africa — Black as well as White

A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of Bolshevism!

What is this Bolshevism that the ruling class is so much afraid of?

Why do they send British Armies to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks?

Have they not had enough killing? Or is it thirst for righteousness that makes them pack Tommy Atkins off to freeze in the snows of Archangel, just when he was looking forward to Home and Blighty?

The Czar massacred half a million nomads in Southern Russia in one swoop. They did not send an army against him.

Why then are they so scared of Bolshevism? Why do they turn pale at its shadow as at the ghost of murdered men? Why?

We will tell you why!

The Great War of Nations is over, and the Class War against Labour has openly begun.

Bolshevism means the rule of the working class! And where the workers rule, the Capitalists cannot carry on their Robber System any more.

A Campaign of Lies

Workers! Do not be misled when the Capitalist Press reviles the Bolsheviks. They slander the Bolsheviks because they have lost the fat money bags they lent to the Czar to crush the Russian people.

They slander the Bolsheviks because they have lost the rich mines and factories which the Russian workmen are now working for themselves; and the land, which forty million peasants are farming in common under the Soviet Republic.

They slander the Bolsheviks because they fear you will follow suit. They are afraid the workers in South Africa will also become free and independent.

They are losing their hair over Bolshevism because they see a prospect of losing their Profits.

Bolshevism Means Labour on Top

The workers of Russia and Germany are forming themselves into Soviets — that is: Councils of Workmen.

They are taking over the control of the country into their own hands — the hands of great wage-earning proletariat. That means the end of the Profiteering System, the end of the Capitalist exploitation of wage-labour for profit.

Why have the workers of Russia and Germany to shed their blood?

Because the Capitalist Class of all countries will sooner tear the people to pieces with their cannon rather than let the people rule. The workers are the people.

Remember the massacre of the workers in Johannesburg in 1913, and in Bloemfontein last February!

Down with British Militarism! It is the weapon to crush the workers.

Down with Allied intervention in Russia!!

Down with the Capitalist Class in all countries!!

The hope of the workers is coming from Bolshevism. The free commonwealth of labour is the actual fact in Russia today.

Bolshevism means the victory of the wage-earners. It will soon spread to Britain, France, America and throughout the world.

Get ready for the World-Wide

Republic of Labour.

The way to get ready is to combine in the workshops. Combine as workers, no matter what colour.

Remember that an injury to one is an injury to all, be he black or white

While the black worker is oppressed, the white worker cannot be free. Before Labour can emancipate itself, black workers as well as white must combine in one organization of Labour, irrespective of craft, colour or creed.

This is Bolshevism: The Solidarity of Labour

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
You have nothing to lose but your Chains.
You have a world to win!!

[Editorial Note: In July 1913 General Smuts called on regiments of the British army to shoot down strikers and members of the public in the centre of Johannesburg. Over 30 men, women and children (mostly white) were killed, and over 200 wounded. There were riots in Bloemfontein in one of the first attempts by blacks to secure a minimum wage for an entire town. The leaders were arrested, but Jones was wrong: there was no massacre.]

During the case the defendants made statements in court on the nature of socialism, on the class struggle, and the meaning and significance of Bolshevism in Russia. Much of this was reprinted in the *International*, 16 May. They denied the charges that Bolshevism meant meaningless violence, and condemned the press for printing libelous stories about Russia during their trial. A joint statement by Jones and Greene set out their right to organise black workers 'in common with their white fellows ...'

Jones also made a statement to the court, answering questions from lawyers and the magistrate. Extracts appeared in the national press, and in the *International* of 16 May. A copy of one report in a newspaper (of unknown title), printed on 6 May was sent to friends in Wales, with Jones's marginal comment, 'Here is the dreamer'.

The Statement

The newspaper account was garbled and was obviously not a verbatim record. We have inserted or replaced a word where we think the reporter got it wrong. We hope we are correct in our rendering.

Firstly Jones gave a short history of the break of the ISL from the Labour Party. The objective of the League he said, was:

... to establish the Socialist Commonwealth and the methods were organization and education by Press and platform, especially with regard to native workers; participation in the elections of public bodies, and the promotion of the establishment of revolutionary industrial organizations by workers to form the skeleton of the Social[ist] Commonwealth.

Of the leaflet, Jones said that he admitted publishing it, but did nothing wrong:

There was no secrecy about its distribution, and he was anxious that all workers should read it, irrespective of their colour. He defined Bolshevism as the 'Solidarity of labour', and to enlarge on that he would specify Socialism, the form of Government contemplated by the Socialist movement, otherwise industrial as distinguished from political democracy. Democracy meant rule by the majority.

'That's not the meaning of democracy, all the same', said the Magistrate.

It is merely a difference in the method of giving expression to the will of the people [said Jones]. Militarism had the distinctive meaning from the word 'army'. Militarism meant Government by military force. Armies became militarism according to the way of recruiting by force or conscription, and according to the uses to which it was put, such as the repression of peoples or classes... Naturally [he] did not believe in murder, and the Bolsheviks which he supported did not countenance murder. One of the objects of Bolshevism was to do away with all war or internal strife. It aimed at abolishing clan distinctions by economic equality, knowing that international conflicts would never cease so long as there existed classes within a nation, because wars arose out of the exploitation of one class by another. The dominant class sought for new areas in which to invest their surplus, and [from] antagonism between dominant classes of the respective nations, international conflicts arose.

... In the *International* as well as in the leaflets he appealed to black as well as white, and published 'The Bolsheviks are Coming' in a native language.

Cross-examined, Jones said, he had been in South Africa about nine and a half years.

His experience of the native population was that of an ordinary person interested in the working class movement, and who therefore made a special study of conditions in industrial centres where the great developments of modern society took place. He had a rough knowledge of the past history of South African native, and knew something of the times of Shaka and Dingaan [Dingane]. The former was a military genius of his time and drilled his troops on approved civilized methods and became dictator by imitating so-called civilized methods. He copied a bad feature of civilization.

He had not been to any native locations, and had no knowledge of tribal customs, but the natives were amenable to the same principles as the white workers. He was not appealing to tribal natives, but to the industrial workers. [Referring to the hostile evidence of J. Gumede, he said:] He did not accept Gumede's description of the town native as a 'hooligan class', but there was a growing class of industrialised natives, who were breaking away from all connections with the tribes. They were not an unruly class, but were regarded as the hopeful element in the population. The breaking of the tribal tie and the making of a home in the industrial field was essential in this country before the labour movement could attain its object. The working class was the only class fit to take control of the country, and he included all classes of workers, irrespective of colour. The majority in this country were Bantu, but while the white workers were in a minority, economically and industrially they had more power, since they could stop industry. They would have to have the co-operation of their black fellow-workers. If the majority ruled in this country, power would be in the hands of the black. When the natives were capable of ruling, they would rule, and he and his friends were doing their utmost to develop that capacity for ruling. The native at present had not yet arrived at that stage, [The newspaper then reported Jones as saying that 'the majority were barbarians'. This is not in the *International* and we do not believe that this was an accurate report. In fact the report now becomes increasingly garbled — as see below]. He regarded bloodshed resulting from his propaganda as the most unlikely thing possible. If a man

could be a Lenin in South Africa, he did not care whether he was black or white.

Asked the inevitable question about liking his sister to marry a black man, he said 'He was not a married man, or a father'. The magistrate pressed the question, and Jones said:

...he wanted combination in the workshop, and no question of inter-marriage was suggested. Intermixture of the races was not the logical outcome of his propaganda. He had been active in the cause in Johannesburg, with the result that there had been a large access to their membership. They had rowdy meetings but they did not appeal to the unruly masses.

[The newspaper report at this stage is garbled, but fortunately the point is taken up in the *International*. We quote from the latter]:

A Socialist Government of Maritzburg alone is an impossibility, but a Maritzburg Soviet would inter alia control judicial functions. The working class movement is not responsible for the violence which attends strikes; that is to be laid quite as much at the door of the employer. The majority is not responsible if its will is opposed....

Bolshevism in South Africa will mean disenfranchisement of landowners and hirers of labour for profit. Bolshevism means world-wide brotherhood, without country boundaries.

[The accused were each fined £75 and four months imprisonment, plus another £10 and a month in jail. On appeal, the sentence was quashed].

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COMMUNISM IN AFRICA

[As printed in *Moscow*, Organ of the III Congress of the Communist International, Vol.1, No.14, 9 June 1921]

The South African delegates were introduced to the bare footed, 12 year old delegate from the Novgorod Young Communist the other day. The first thing he asked us was 'Why aren't you black!'

Coming from South Africa, we feel quite apologetic about our colour. An African delegation should at least include Negroes. This will be remedied in time; but it would be a mistake to think that in future there should be no white South African delegates. The African revolution will be led by white workers. In Africa there are 150 million natives, it is true, and a few hundred thousand white workers. But the industrialised and semi-proletarianised native workers moving in and around modern industry do not number more than a couple of million. These are mainly found in the Union of South Africa, comprising the provinces of the Transvaal, Free State, Natal and the Cape. Here is the entry to the African Continent. The railway line 2,000 miles long, runs right up to Elisabethville to the Belgian Congo, in the heart of the dark continent.

Around Johannesburg in the Transvaal is found the world-renowned gold mining industry, the most modern and most concentrated of its kind in the world, extending over a 60 mile gold reef and producing half the gold output of the world. This is the economic university of Southern Africa and of territories to the north. Here natives and whites are exploited side by side under two sharply distinct standards of life. Here you have the proportions of native [to] white skilled very much the same as those obtaining on the world scale: namely, a European factory proletariat, viz-a-viz the mass of Asiatic and African cheap labour. South Africa is thus unique in presenting a replica of the world problem revolving [resolving] a solution for it.

We are in the habit of calling these white skilled workers the aristocrats of labour. But they are not ordinary labour aristocrats. The white workers of South Africa had some very militant fights. In 1913, the white miners and other workers had a general strike, which led to a pitched battle between them and the troops in the streets of Johannesburg resulting in 21 killed and several hundred wounded. In 1914, a general strike on a large scale broke out and the government mobilised sixty thousand armed burghers from the veld and marched them into Johannesburg to crush the movement. South African capitalism then distinguished itself by deporting nine of the trade union leaders to England.

It was in the 1913 strike that it first occurred to some of the most militant white workers that the native workers are also a factor in the labour movement. And from that time there has been a growing minority of the white workers who realise that the emancipation of the white can only be achieved by solidarity with the native, and who laugh derisively at the superficial socialism which ignores the native working masses.

Since then the white workers of South Africa have participated in the general enthusiasms from trade union organization [?] But there has been a decline in general militancy although hardly a union, as such, escaped conflict with the masters during the last few years. The general tendency as expressed in the policy of the South African Industrial Federation [the trade union federation] is one of collaboration with the masters on Joint Boards, etc. The master class has realised that the white workers have to

be humoured as a protection against the native masses, and as a means of keeping white and black workers apart.

Meanwhile, the native worker is waking up. Progress is slow! but that is due no less to the lack of resources in the Communist movement than to the backwardness of the native himself. For it is the peculiar task of the Communist movement to shake the native from his age old sleep. The communist movement is almost a purely white workers' movement so far, and has its work cut out to keep the revolution before the white workers. But it is just this question, solidarity with the native workers, that distinguishes the communist movement from all other sections of the labour movement in South Africa. The 'left' anarchist joins with the Labour politicians in branding us a 'kaffir party'. The native worker is the touchstone of [the] revolution. He can only organise the revolution. The 'kaffir stock market' [that is, gold mining shares] in London rests on his cheap labour. It depends on his remaining illiterate and backward, and content with his pig-level of existence. The very idea of native trade unions sends the master class into hysterics. Another shilling or two in their daily pay would create a panic on the market. But the native worker is not very worried about the problems of his boss. He is a typical proletariat. He is a lovable sort. We cannot listen to his loud uproarious laughter without being reminded of Marx's conception of a proletarian. He has already given some blind kicks to capital. Last year 80,000 unorganized mine workers spontaneously struck work for better pay. Before that, in 1918, the Johannesburg workers rose in protest against the passport system. Every South African worker is labelled and ticketed ...[and here Jones listed the passes]. In the anti-passport movement referred to, hundreds were marched off to gaol. A strike of native workers in the Municipal services broke out at the same time. The movement so alarmed the authorities that several members of the communist movement were arrested, and a grand charge of incitement to revolt brought against them. To illustrate the loyalty of the natives to each other, it is worth mentioning an incident in connection with this trial. The chief witness for the government was a native named Luke Messina, a member of the Industrial Workers of Africa. This was a native union formed by the communists. [Messina] had been sent into the union as a spy by the Native Affairs department, and informed us of the fact. After reading to the court the elaborate affidavit placed in his hands by the authorities, he told the court the affidavit was false in every particular, and the whole case broke down amid great sensation.

Our concern in Africa is not to emphasise the native movement to the exclusion of the white, nor the white to the exclusion of the native. Our message to the white is 'solidarity with the native workers'. In the white political field we have a fine opportunity of forcing the issue on the attention of the white workers with immunity from the police. And the echo of this propaganda reaches the native workers as well. Touching on

the political movement brings us to the South African Labour Party and the Communist movement which has grown out of it.

The Trade Union movement of white workers was naturally reflected by a fairly vigorous Labour Party, with a social democratic structure, to which the trade unions affiliated according to the votes of their members. It had a right wing led by Creswell, a mine manager; and a left or more class conscious element, led by Andrews, a mechanic, who today is the secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa. Before the war, the Labour Party had 8 MPs (South Africa, of course is a self governing dominion). In 1915 the issue of the war broke the Labour Party into two. The executive had a majority of anti-militarists of various shades. But the bulk of the trade unions followed Creswell. At the general election the Labour Party lost seats in spite of its beating the jingo drum. The International Socialist League, as the breakaway section called itself, also put up two candidates purely as a demonstration of its position and, as expected, got heavily defeated.

[The article then said that when the ISL 'declared for a revolutionary platform regarding the native workers', most members 'slunk back' to the Labour Party]. What part will Africa play in the world revolution? Our Indian comrades are fond of that clause which says that European labour cannot emancipate itself without Africa and India; while the British comrades regard it as a moot point. This one thing is certain: the native workers of Africa feed by their labour a large battalion of White Guards in the West End of London.

[Jones then described the 'fairly large Native Union' in the Cape — that is the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa; and said that there were now a group of blacks in the CPSA]. And it is [now] evident that the black battalions of the proletariat of Africa and India must first be on the march before world capitalism can be brought to the ground.

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On 13 July 1923 the *International* printed an article by Ivon Jones on a theme that he had initiated in 1921 at the Third Congress of the Comintern:

AFRICA'S AWAKENING FOR A WORLD NEGRO CONGRESS

The Negro is the greatest living accuser of capitalist civilization. The wealth of England and America is built upon his bones. The slave ships of Bristol and New York, with good Quaker prayers to speed them, founded the fortunes of many a Christian home. Every capitalist government is drenched with the blood of the Negro. British capitalism in South Africa, the French in the Cameroons, Belgium in the Congo, and the German

Empire in Damaraland — they all constitute the blackest record in human history of mass slaughters and human violation of every primitive human right continued up to the present day. Even the liberation of the American slave was only an incident of a civil war between two factions of property holders engaged in a quarrel over the forms of exploitation, and was not the aim of the war as is commonly supposed. And as an aftermath of that war there was created a social attitude towards the Negro race which leaves the one time chattel slaves still degraded outcasts among the peoples of the earth.

This artificially generated race animosity towards the Negro pervading the whole of Anglo-Saxon society infects also the large working masses. The African Negro is the hewer of wood and the drawer of water even for the white workers of Europe. The workers of England are trained from childhood to regard the Zulu and Matabele wars as heroic exploits, rather than foul pages in English history. Hence the apathy and social prejudice towards the Negro race, for we hate most what we have injured most. But this period is passing, just as the days of the Second International are passing. The workers of Europe are no longer sharing the profits of their masters. The Communist International has appeared, and calls into the one great proletarian family the Negroes of Africa, as well as the peoples of the East, along with the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries.

This is the first ray of hope for the Negroes throughout the centuries of their oppression. For the first time, the Negro Communists appeared at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, and a resolution was passed declaring in favour of a World Congress of Negroes. There have been World Congresses of Negroes before. But they have been composed of members of the very thin layer of Negro intelligentsia, who have placed vain hopes in professions of loyalty to their oppressors. The London Congress of 1921 greeted the recruitment of Negroes into the French army as a mark of citizenship. Among the huge toiling masses of Negroes such a Congress passes by without notice.

There are also the Congresses held by the association headed by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican Negro who has captured the imagination of the Negro masses in America, and whose slogan 'Back to Africa' and 'Africa for the Africans', are even spreading into Africa itself. This organization is strongly flavoured with religious and racial charlatanism. The proletarian character of the Negro mass is not so distinct in America as for instance, in South Africa. In the latter country the Negroes form a race of labourers, without any shopkeeping or small tenant element. Probably the small property psychology of the tenant farmers and the small trader element in America reflecting on the purely labouring Negro masses, has a lot to do with what is now notoriously known as 'Garveyism', a charlatan exploitation of awakening race consciousness which, in so far as it takes anti-white forms, is secretly encouraged by the capitalist class both in America and in South Africa. The number of Negro