Urgent Questions of the Work of the C.P. of South Africa.

(Letter from South Africa.)

By Johna

By taking the path of organising and leading the mass struggle against imperialist slave oppression, and in the main having overcome the influence of the renegade groups of Bunting, our Party has grown into a big political force. This is the tremendous significance of the change which has taken place in the Party in the last 2 or 3 years. But on this path, a number of mistakes have been discovered, arising from the limited experience of our Party and the newness of the path.

The situation in our Party is extremely serious. To a greater extent than ever, we begin to feel the danger of the Party being isolated from the masses of workers and toilers. The Party understands that if this isolation is not rapidly overcome, the Party will be converted into a small sectarian organisation estranged from the broad masses.

The isolation of the Party from the masses is expressed in the decrease in the membership of the Party from 4,500 to not more than 300 at the present time, and a reduction in the number of organised supporters of the Party. The trade unions in the African Federation of Trade Unions have greatly declined and have even been merged into the trade unions of the European Federation of Trade Unions. In the Red Aid and the Friends of Soviet Russia, almost only Party members remain.

There are comrades in the Party, among them even members of the leading organs of the Party, who have not yet seen the isolation of the Party from the masses, but on the contrary have even tried to count on the forces of the Party and of organised supporters as an advantage. One of them stated that "the fall of membership is the result of the steady campaign to raise the political level of the whole Party and also arises from the fact that the right wing which strongly existed inside the Party".

These comrades have also stated that this is not a loss, not an isolation, but a "process of cleansing the Party and forming real prerequisites for a genuine Bolshevik Party in South Africa."

These "Bolsheviks" have forgotten that a condition and prerequisite for the successful development of the Communist movement is ability on the part of the advanced Communist workers to strengthen and extend their contacts with the masses and not turn away from the masses to one side.

Our Party overcame the opportunistic position and line of Bunting in its ranks, and under the slogan of the independent native republic, began to organise and raise the masses for the struggle against Anglo-African imperialism.

The mass burning of passes in 1928, strikes in various parts of the country, the demonstrations of white and black workers in 1931, the mass resistance to the slave laws under the leadership of our Party, will pass into the history of the struggle of the toiling masses of Africa. In the process of this struggle our Party grew and strengthened, becoming a Party of black and white workers, an influential Party among the toiling masses of the country. During this period, the trade unions, the Red Aid and the Friends of Soviet Russia grew up and the circulation of the paper increased. We cannot call the fall of membership of the Party and the T.U.s which took place in the last period a process of cleansing from opportunists. This is a libel on the part of the Party, on its revolutionary supporters. The Party has had a cleansing period—the period of struggle against the opportunistic renegade views of the Bunting group. The rotten portion of the Party left the Party at that time together with Mr. Bunting.

The drop in the number of members of the Party and the Red trade unions is not a cleansing process but a divorce of the Party from the masses. This separation must be overcome, and the reasons must be discovered which have caused it.

Of course this fact of the isolation of the Party from the masses must not conceal from the reader the successes of the Party, its ideological growth, its increased fighting powers, etc. The Party has got rid of the Right renegade group, carrying on a struggle against Right chauvinist opportunism in its ranks. This cleansing of its ranks from the Right opportunists made it possible for the Party to move ahead.

The Party formed and trained a whole stratum of workers, native and white, who follow the Party, a stratum of proletarian revolutionaries.

The existence of this stratum makes itself felt in all the actions of the working class. This stratum of advanced workers is already so big and so strongly linked up with the masses that government persecution cannot destroy it. It should be counselled that the Party must try as far as possible to convert it into a mass fighting proletarian Party, arisen from its experience in leading the masses.

The essence of the position of the Party is that the unfavourable phenomena in the Party are the result of growth—dictatorship's growth and maturing of a Communist movement which recognises its forces and contacts with the masses. This is why the Party finds strength in itself to tell the workers openly of some of the mistakes which have partially led to isolation or may deepen it. Without giving way to panic, opposing everyone who tries to explain that the mistakes were made because the whole line of the Party was wrong and that we should not have been so energetic in the fight against the opportunists, the Party considers it an urgent task to point out its mistakes.

None of the members of the South African Party consider that the situation in South Africa is unfavourable for the activity of the Party. On the contrary, the members of the Party speak of the increasing suffering of the masses, the growth of the spontaneous resistances of the masses, strikes, etc.; this is the reason why the Government voted supplementary emergency for the police and to replace the native security with the white police. This is the reason why the unprecedented increase in the terror, but the terror is not against a broken revolutionary movement. No, the terror is trying to put a stop to the commencing upsurge of the revolutionary struggle of the masses.

The isolation of the Party from the masses did not take place because the masses had become less revolutionary while the Party remained in its old position. The Party has not learned sufficiently well that a struggle for the Party line means a constant attraction of new fighters for the Party line, and an exacerbation of the struggle of the Party for the Party line.

Overcoming the opportunistic tactics of the renegade Bunting, the Party took the path of mass revolutionary action against the imperialist slave system of South Africa. In the practice of the mass struggle the Party verified its slogans and its actions against this new and difficult path—but the only acceptable path for revolutionary party—was marked with mistakes. These mistakes were not deliberate and can easily be put right. A guarantee for the rectification of the Party line is the fact that we already understand the causes which gave rise to the isolation. In the practice of the Party, mistakes have been found during the last year on such big key questions as:

1. The forms of the mass struggle and the slogan of the direct struggle of the masses for an independent native republic.

2. The United front of white and black workers, the work of the trade unions and in the trade unions.

3. The struggle against white chauvinism and national-reformism and their manifestations in the ranks of the Party, the trade unions and organisations near to the Party.

(To be continued.)