
The printed propaganda of the Communist Party of South Africa during World War II¹

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Abstract

This article examines the printed propaganda of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) from the World War II (1939-1945) period by briefly describing the impact that the War had on the party and its propaganda production. This is followed by an iconographic analysis of the subjects who appear prominently in the images contained in the propaganda. Four iconographic types are described and the reasons for their emergence and visual appearance are proffered. It is argued that the impact of the War on the CPSA and its production of printed propaganda was largely positive, owing to a change in perceptions of the party following the Soviet Union's declaration of war on Germany and the easing of State repression on the party. As a result, CPSA membership numbers increased, the volume and variety of printed propaganda expanded and the audiences for the propaganda grew. The gentleman, intellectual, leader and soldier are identified as iconographic types which appear prominently in the CPSA's printed propaganda during the War. The emergence of these figures is ascribed to the 'accommodationist path' followed by the CPSA during the War, the development of closer ties between the African National Congress (ANC) and the CPSA, and the alignment of the party's propaganda with values relating to respectability, which resonated with a large part of the audience for the propaganda.

Key words: Communist Party; South Africa; Second World War; printed propaganda; image; iconography

Introduction

A linocut cartoon printed in the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) newspaper *Umsebenzi* (The Worker) in 1934, captioned with the strong sentiment 'GET OUT!', shows the politician Jan Smuts flying through the air after being kicked by a giant worker (Figure 1).

This image is emblematic of CPSA propaganda images from the first half of the 1930s, which were premised on an aggressive binary conflict between the figure of the black worker and his white enemies (Pretorius 2007; 2008). This binary conflict was influenced by Soviet rhetoric from the 1930s and its preoccupation with internal and external enemies (Clark 1981:114). Bonnell (1997:9)

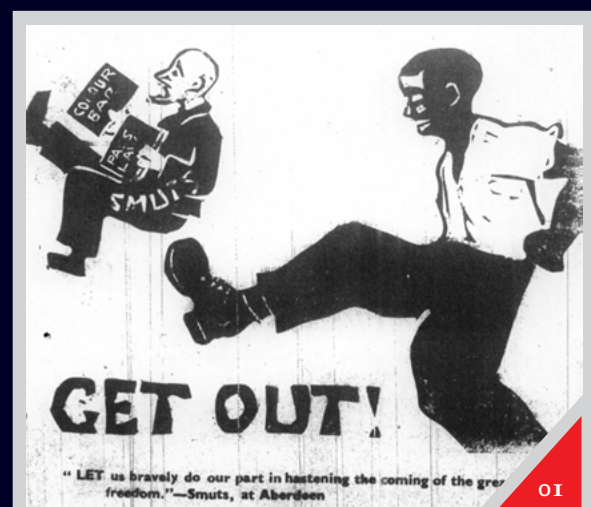


Figure 1: Cartoon from *Umsebenzi* (22.12.1934:1).

notes that at the outset of the 1930s and into the 1940s the repertoire of enemies depicted in Soviet propaganda grew:

... to include a multiplicity of new images corresponding to the categories of transgressors concurrently introduced into verbal political discourse. These are images of 'the other', the negative figures against which Bolsheviks attempted to define their positive heroes and create models for acceptable thought and action. Such images served to reinforce a Manichean view that divided the world into two camps (analogous to the forces of good and evil), which existed in a state of irreconcilable conflict.

In a survey of Soviet posters printed only between 1930 and 1933, Bonnell (1997:212) identifies more than fifty categories of enemies. External enemies, for example, included 'interventionists, White bandits ... German Social Democrats, social fascists, monarchists, fascists, Hitler, Kautsky, and the pope', whereas internal enemies were identified as, among many others, monarchists, tsarist high officials, members of the tsarist entourage, the tsar, capitalists, priests, rabbis and mullahs.

The CPSA propaganda from the early 1930s also constructed a range of enemies against which the heroic worker was defined: these included the capitalist, policeman, soldier, priest, 'good boy' and politician (Pretorius 2008:54-65). Mr M Liebenberg from Paulpietersburg commented in *Umsebenzi* that '[s]ome of the cartoons, especially one showing General Smuts being kicked by a Native was [sic] offensive' (*Umsebenzi* 1935:1). Such 'offensive' images disappeared, along with most other depictions of enemies, from the party's printed propaganda during World War II. Compared to the revolutionary and confrontational linocuts printed in *Umsebenzi* in the early 1930s, CPSA propaganda during the War appeared far more mainstream and conformist.

This article examines the CPSA's printed propaganda from World War II by briefly describing the impact the War had on the party and its propaganda production. This is followed by an iconographic analysis of the subjects who appear prominently in the images contained in the propaganda. Four iconographic types are described, namely the gentleman, intellectual, leader and soldier, and the reasons for their emergence and visual appearance are proffered.

World War II and CPSA printed propaganda

In September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany, and South Africa followed suit. At the outbreak of the War, the CPSA branches were divided in their opinions whether they should support it or not (Drew 2002: 228-229), but soon the party denounced it as an 'imperialist war' between 'rival capitalist powers' (Callinicos 1990:103-104). However, following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the CPSA did an about turn and issued a statement supporting the War (Callinicos 1990:104). In reversing its position, the CPSA allied itself with the South African government and supported its war policies, thereby setting the party on an 'accommodationist path' (Drew 2002:234). As a consequence, during the war years, the CPSA toned down its policies, opposed strikes,² as these were thought to be 'counter-productive to fighting the fascist enemy', placed a 'tactical emphasis on reform rather than socialism' and avoided confrontation with the government (Furlong 1997:80).

The Soviet Union's entry into the War saw the tide turn in favour of the communists. Support for the CPSA increased, the party turned towards the white electorate, and repression by the state tapered off, allowing the party to operate openly (Drew 2002:234).

The communists' newfound respectability became clear when in 1942, CPSA stalwart, Bill Andrews, was invited to broadcast a pro-war May Day address on South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) radio, General Jan Smuts, the prime minister of South Africa, 'opened relations with the Soviets, the Minister of Justice joined the Friends of the Soviet Union, and the party held patriotic rallies' (Furlong 1997:81). CPSA members volunteered and served in the South African Defence Force and contributed to the establishment of the Springbok Legion, 'which organised soldiers to campaign for democracy in South Africa' (Callinicos 1990:104).

The party's influence and membership, particularly among whites, increased substantially, and Communist Party members were elected to the Johannesburg and Cape Town City Councils (Bunting [sa]:2). In addition, the party's credibility improved in African nationalist circles, and membership numbers grew to 1,500 in January 1944 and to 2,360 by October 1944 (Switzer 1997b:38). The moderation of the CPSA during World War II 'helped encourage cooperation with the more conservative ANC leaders' (Furlong 1997:80), and many ANC leaders became CPSA members (Zug 2007:88).

The CPSA's decision to support the War resulted in an increase in the volume, range and diversity of the types of printed propaganda, and its accompanying visual imagery, produced by the party. The audience for printed propaganda expanded, and the CPSA's 'biggest single activity at that time was in the field of propaganda and publicity' (Bernstein [sa]). The propaganda produced by the party during the War included an official party newspaper, called *Inkululeko* (Freedom), a number of other serial publications, large, full-colour posters, as well as pamphlets, leaflets, and booklets, many of which included images (such as cartoons and photographs) and even colour.

In addition to *Inkululeko*, serial publications aimed at specific audiences appeared as well during this time. The CPSA's theoretical journal, *Freedom*, had a limited readership drawn mostly from within party circles. *Die Ware Republikein* (The True Republican) was aimed at the Afrikaans-speaking working class, but survived for only a few issues. Similarly, the *Cape Party Organiser* and *Inkululeko Newsletter* disappeared quickly (Ceiriog Jones 1997:341).

CPSA members were also involved in the founding, running and production of the newspaper *The Guardian* (Zug 2007). Although the paper was described as the CPSA's unofficial newspaper (Switzer 1997b:274) and the most influential of the South African socialist papers, it was never publicly acknowledged as part of the party's official propaganda efforts. A commentator at the time claimed that '*Inkululeko* ... is designed mostly for Africans' while '*The Guardian* is read primarily by Europeans' (Correll 1946:4). Approximately two-thirds of *Inkululeko*'s content was written in African languages, including isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and isiXhosa, but the front page and the editorial page were always in English (Ceiriog Jones 1997:346).

According to Ceiriog Jones (1997:347), *Inkululeko*'s advertising content – which focused on '[e]ssential goods and services, mainly medicine, furniture, clothing and food' – implied 'an intended audience that was poor, urban and African'. Most of the advertisers were based near or in Johannesburg, and Ceiriog Jones (1997:349) concludes that this suggests that most of the readers were also based in Johannesburg.

With regard to pamphlets, it is claimed that most of these were aimed at 'Europeans' (Correll 1946:19). Although Afrikaans and African-language pamphlets were printed, the bulk of the pamphlets were published

in English. Some pamphlets were bilingual, with English printed on the one side and a vernacular language on the other. Posters appeared only in English and Afrikaans, with English posters predominating. The headlines of the posters indicate a focus on calls to support the War, the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Silk-screening, a relatively new printing technique at the time, was used for the printing of some of the CPSA posters (Seidman 2007:29). The newspaper and other types of propaganda were printed on equipment owned by the party (Correll 1946:17) or the services of commercial printing firms were used.

The production of printed propaganda was funded from a variety of sources, including the monthly dues paid by party members and donations received from sympathisers and readers of the paper. Money was raised through fundraising campaigns, functions and collections organised by the CPSA and its members. The sale of printed propaganda and advertising space also brought in revenue.

Inkululeko appeared in an edition of 12,000 copies by August 1941, and this increased to 18,000 by December 1941 (Ceiriog Jones 1997:346). The paper alleged in May 1942 that 20,000 copies per issue were printed, and on 9 January 1943 claimed to have a print run of 20,000 or 40,000 copies a month (Ceiriog Jones 1997:346). The CPSA produced numerous pamphlets, which were sold for a penny in quantities as high as 40,000 to 50,000 copies (Bernstein [sa]).

A variety of images, including drawings, cartoons and illustrations executed in a range of media such as linocut, water colour, pencil, and pen and ink, appeared in the printed propaganda. Photographs, however, were printed most often in *Inkululeko*. According to Ceiriog Jones (1997:349), news photographs were expensive, and, therefore, seldom printed, 'but stock photos of

South African communists, mostly Africans associated with the newspaper, were used again and again'.

The gentleman

Photographic portraits of Africans appeared for the first time in the CPSA press during the second half of the 1920s as a result of the party's decision to shift its focus from the recruitment of white workers to that of African workers. The appearance of these portraits coincided with a period in which many CPSA members were also members of the ANC. The portrait of Josiah Gumede (Figure 2) – who was elected president of the ANC in 1927 and who was the leader of a group of ANC members with communist 'leanings' (Maylam 1986:157) – appeared in the party newspaper during 1928.

The radicalism in the ANC was short-lived and replaced with suspicion towards the communists during the 1930s, a position that changed again only in the 1940s under the leadership of Dr Alfred Xuma (Furlong 1997: 69). Furlong (1997:69) argues that during the War, the threat from South African fascists, including the Greyshirts, New Order, *Ossewabrandwag*, and Daniel Malan's 'Purified' National Party, contributed to 'energis[ing] the conservative ANC leadership, made possible (despite many ANC leaders' scepticism) extensive cooperation with the CPSA, and set the scene for an expanded liberation alliance, beginning with the 1947 "Doctors' Pact" between the Indian congresses and ANC'.

As the relationship between the party and the ANC disappeared during the 1930s, so too did the use of portrait photography in the party newspaper. Portrait photography emerged more strongly than ever in *Inkululeko*³ during the war at a time when the relations between the two parties were warming up. The

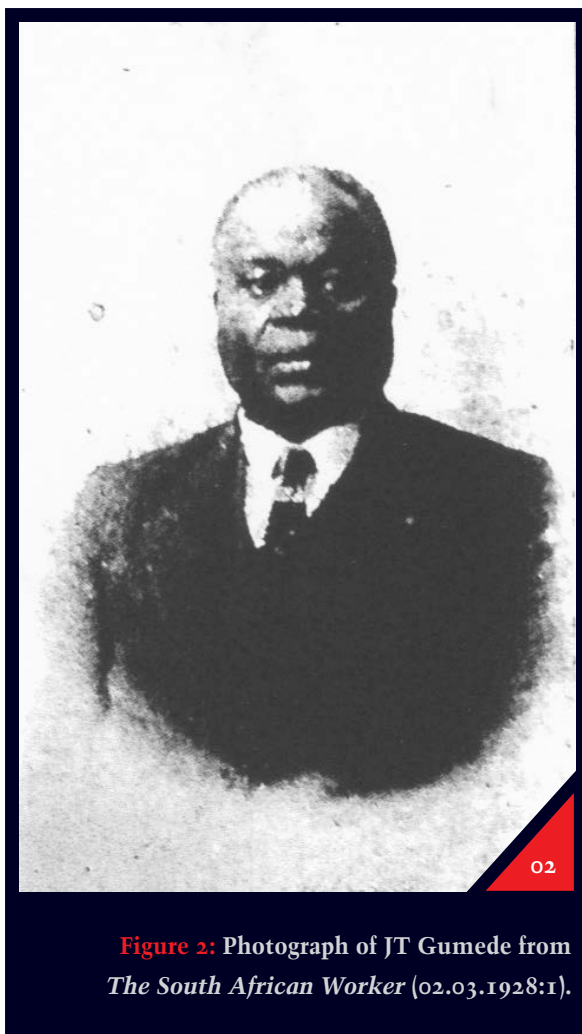


Figure 2: Photograph of JT Gumede from *The South African Worker* (02.03.1928:1).

photographs of Gumede from 1928, Edwin Mofutsanyana (Figure 3) from 1943 and Alpheus Maliba (Figure 4) from 1944 are representative of the portraits printed in the CPSA's propaganda.

These photographic portraits conform to traditional codes of portrait photography, which are typically composed to include the subject's head and shoulders, or torso, from the front, or in a three-quarter side view. These well-lit studio pictures show the subjects at their best, neatly dressed in suits, white shirts and ties. Tagg (1988:37) notes that the development of portrait photography coincided with 'the rise of the middle and lower middle classes towards greater social, economic and political importance'. Portrait photography democratised the ownership of portraits of the self, which for

centuries had been the preserve of the aristocratic, rich and privileged, and portrait photography took on the 'signifiers of aristocratic portraiture' (Tagg 1988:37-38).

The invention in 1845 of the *carte-de-visite*, small photographic prints mounted on card, made mass-produced photography possible (Holland 2000:130). These photographs, named after the visiting cards of the 'leisured classes', made class differences less obvious than in real life and saw the middle classes 'pos[ing] stiffly in their best clothes' (Holland 2000:130). Similarly, the working classes opted to present themselves in dignified studio portraits (Holland 2000:137). This representational tradition was adopted by urban working- and middle-class Africans in South Africa, and is explained by Mofokeng (1996:56) as reflecting the aspirations of mission-educated and/or property-owning Africans who modelled their dress and behaviour on that of European immigrants, particularly the English.

Ross (1999:43) argues that as a result of the rule of the British in the Cape Colony since 1795, 'Englishness was the major symbol used to determine what was right and acceptable in the political life of the Cape Colony' throughout the nineteenth century. Clothing is one of the main ways to claim status and respectability, and Ross (1999:85) points out that Pixley Seme, a founder of the ANC, presented himself in photographs in 'full court dress, with frock coat, top hat and umbrella' as a way to show equality 'with all the lawyers of South Africa'. Although this did not guarantee acceptance of Seme by fellow white lawyers, it did increase 'his prestige among his various black constituencies' (Ross 1999:85-86).

According to Honeyman (2003:57), the suit became the dress of choice for men of all social groups from the late nineteenth century until World War II in England. Collars, ties and clean clothes indicated that the person



Figure 3: Photograph of Edwin Mofutsanyana from *Inkululeko* (18.12.1943:5).

was not a manual worker, and, therefore, such clothing communicated 'a higher and more desirable status' (Ugolini 2007:31). The suit also signified the wearer's adherence to the established order, and ideas of masculinity based on 'respectability, rationality, sobriety, and diligence' (Ugolini 2007:30-31).

Honeyman (2003:58-59) argues that the increase in the number of men wearing suits suggested 'a more democratic and egalitarian society', as 'respectable working-class and lower-middle-class men were offered the opportunity to dress like gentlemen'. Honeyman (2003: 59), however, quickly adds that 'this did not mean that all were regarded or appeared to be equal or equally gentlemanly'. Ugolini (2007:31) agrees with this view, stating that 'working and lower-middle class men who wore collars and ties for work, as well as on Sundays, were not necessarily viewed with admiration'.

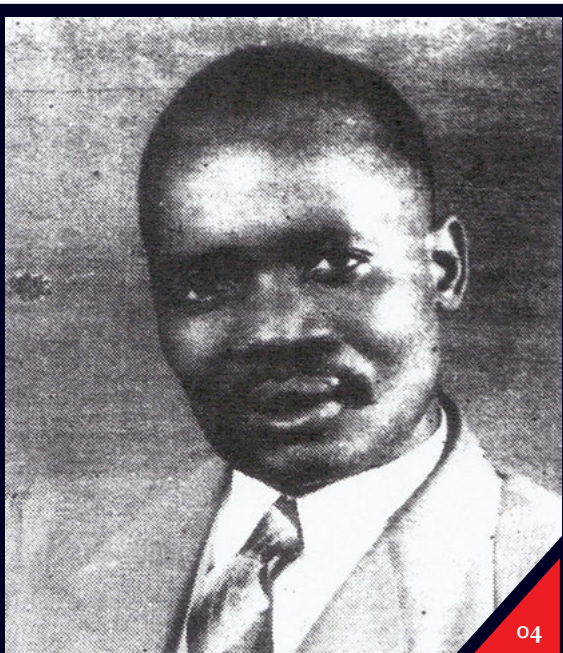


Figure 4: Photograph of AM Maliba from *Inkululeko* (10.06.1944:8).

Tagg (1988:37) describes a portrait photograph as 'a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity' and the photographic and sartorial codes reproduced in *Inkululeko* portraits clearly attempt to show the subjects as 'respectable'. This social identity is not surprising if one considers Goodhew's (2000:265) argument that the majority of black radicals of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s were 'respectable', supported 'the fight against crime, the need for temperance and the importance of education' and a 'number had considerable links with religion'.

Goodhew (2000:265-266) notes that from 1930 to 1955, 'working-class respectability' was commonplace among the inhabitants of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, among whom the CPSA and the ANC 'laboured with much effort and mixed success'. The Western Areas was a collection of townships predominantly populated by Africans earning low wages through

unskilled or semi-skilled work for a variety of employers (Goodhew 2000:241). It was 'one of the most significant centers of population in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s', and, therefore, 'to assert that respectability was essential to a working class district such as Western Areas is to imply that it had a much wider significance' (Goodhew 2000:241). Goodhew (2000:241) defines respectability as a 'stress on economic independence, on orderliness, cleanliness and fidelity in sexual relations ... often linked to religion ... belief in education as beneficial', and he contends that in their commitment to education, religion, and law and order the people of the Western Areas were 'deeply attached to respectability'.

The image of Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana⁴ (1899-1995), the most represented person in *Inkululeko* in the first half of the 1940s, exemplifies the idea of what a respectable man should look like. Roux (1948:233) singles out Mofutsanyana as one of the party intellectuals who played an important role in the CPSA's history. Mofutsanyana joined the CPSA in 1927 and was educated in the CPSA night school (Edgar 2005:3). He studied in Moscow from 1932 to 1934, became the general secretary of the CPSA in the late 1930s and editor of the party paper in June 1945 (Ceiriog Jones 1997:343; Davidson, Filatova, Gorodnov & Johns 2003:xxvi) after serving on its editorial board during the 1930s and 1940s (Drew 2002:197; Ceiriog Jones 1997:343). During the 1930s, Mofutsanyana participated in the Civilian Protection Service, which aimed at reducing crime in the townships of Johannesburg (Goodhew 2000:260). He campaigned under the banner of the CPSA for a seat on the Native Representatives Council in 1937 and 1942 (Edgar 2005:34, 50). Mofutsanyana could read most African languages and has been described as '... quiet, shy to the point of diffidence, an intellectual and a thinker ...' (Bernstein 1999:56).



Figure 5: Photograph of Edwin Mofutsanyana from *Inkululeko* (29.01.1944:4).



Figure 6: Photograph of Georgi Dimitrov from *Inkululeko* (15.01.1944:3).

The intellectual

This image of Mofutsanyana resembles a photograph of the Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov (Figure 6), which appears in *Inkululeko*. Both images link to Viktor Govorkov's 1940 poster 'Stalin in the Kremlin cares about each one of us', in which, '[i]lluminated by the soft glowing light of a table lamp, Stalin sits at his desk with pen in hand, appearing deep in thought as he writes' (Bonnell 1997:168).

Lenin was also often shown reading or writing, a pose which Clark (1997:76) interprets as 'validat[ing] his self-appointed position as the legitimate interpreter of doctrine'. This form of representation corresponds to the depiction of medieval scribes copying manuscripts (Lamia 1998:477) with quills, and evokes the same associations of knowledgeable authority that these medieval images carry.

Some images of Stalin from CPSA propaganda of the 1930s and 1940s (Figure 7 and Figure 8) show him contemplatively drawing on or lighting a pipe.

This 'pleasantly avuncular' representation of Stalin 'as kind and unpretentious' was carefully cultivated in Soviet propaganda during the 1930s and heralded a move in which Stalin as the individual gradually displaced the heroic proletariat (Bonnell 1997:162).

The association of smoking as indicative of intellectualism and individualism emerged during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, as typified by photographs of individuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre, George Orwell and Albert Einstein (Goodman 2005a:270-271). This association was the result of the late nineteenth century practice of elevating the appreciation and selection of tobacco, cigars and pipes to an 'art' form, which gave expression to individual taste, and which was



Figure 7: Portrait of Stalin from *Umsebenzi* (01.08.1932:1).

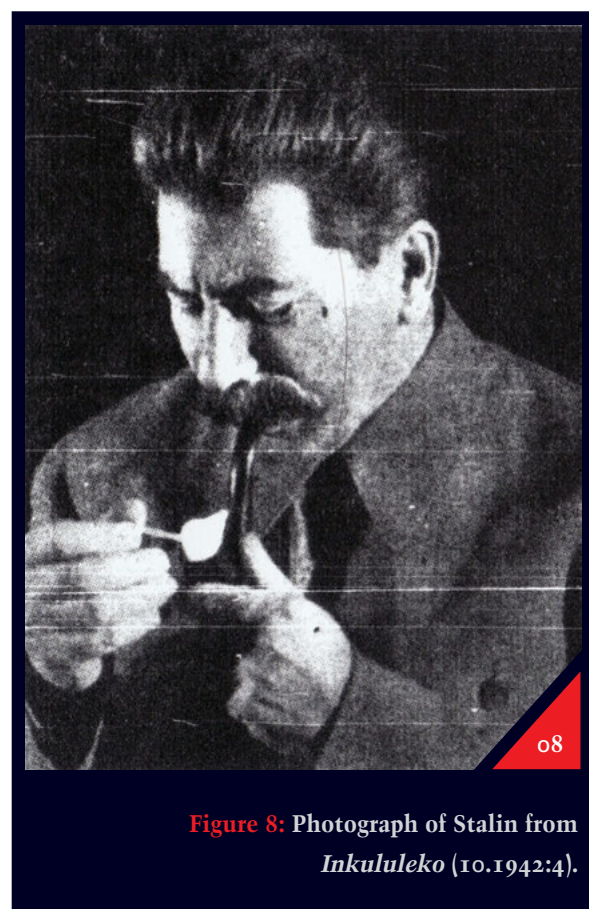


Figure 8: Photograph of Stalin from *Inkululeko* (10.1942:4).

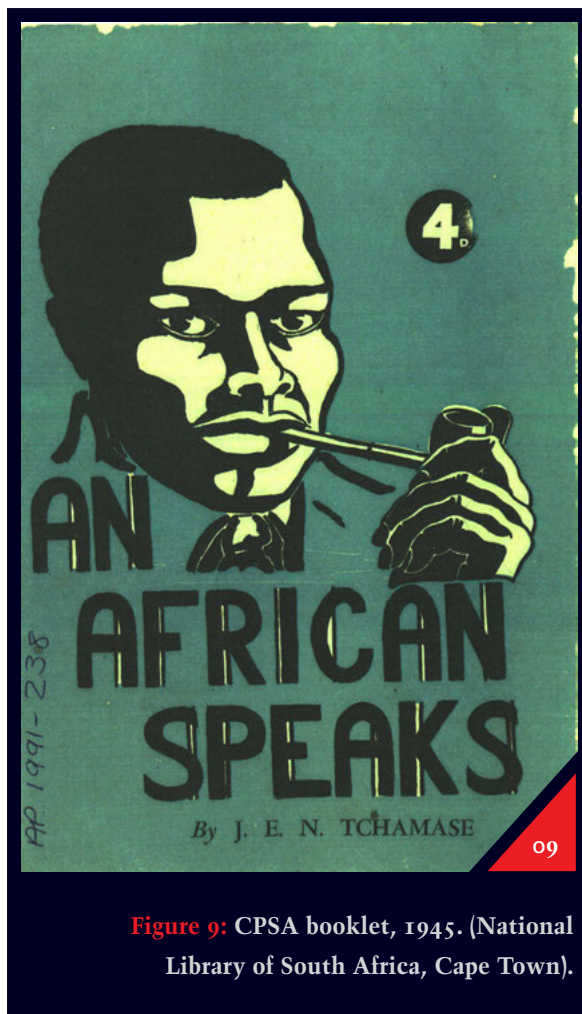


Figure 9: CPSA booklet, 1945. (National Library of South Africa, Cape Town).

an ostensibly male activity (Goodman 2005a:153). The pipe as ‘one of the most elegant, intriguing and artful utensils for smoking tobacco’ received much praise in art and literature (Goodman 2005b:422), and intellectuals often credited tobacco-smoking with leading to ‘creativity and erudition’ (Goodman 2005a:270).

The influence of images of Stalin smoking is seen on the covers of the publications *An African speaks* (Figure 9) (Tchamase 1945:cover page), *Waarom ek ’n Kommunis is* (Why I am a Communist) (Figure 10) (Du Plessis 1945: cover page) and *The Communists’ Reply* (Figure 11) (CPSA 1947:cover page).

The authors, JEN Tchamase, D du Plessis and WH Andrews, exude an air of seriousness, implying that their words carry weight and are, therefore, deserving of

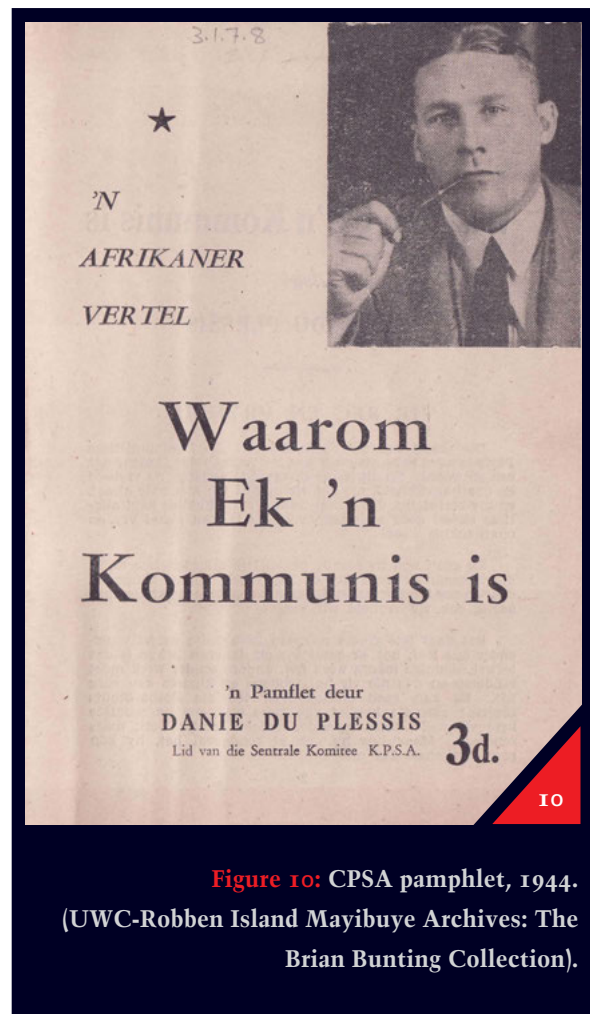


Figure 10: CPSA pamphlet, 1944. (UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives: The Brian Bunting Collection).

readers’ close attention. The skill with which the portrait of each author is executed contributes to the persuasiveness of the visual argument. The photographic portrait of Du Plessis (1945) seems to offer empirical proof of the authenticity of his testimonial, while the illustrated representation of Tchamase (1945) is somehow less convincing.

Bolshevik thinking views the intellectual as a driving force behind communist revolution. The emphasis on the role of the intellectual is built into the distinction between communist propaganda and agitation. Communist propaganda targets the more ‘advanced’ segments of society, such as party members and the non-party intelligentsia, and involves a rigorous explanation of the history and tasks of the Bolshevik party, as well as the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin

(Inkeles 1951:41). On the other hand, communist agitation aims at educating the masses and mobilising workers to participate in bringing about a new social order.

Soviet propaganda was based on a 'rational appeal' due to the Marxist-Leninist 'claim that it can be validated solely through an appeal on intellect' and that it should not be 'accepted even partly on trust' as some ideologies and religions demand (Inkeles 1951:73). In 1937, Stalin charted a new course for the propaganda of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union whereby attention was shifted from the workers to the intelligentsia, with the result that the primary goal of party propaganda became the 'inculcation of the intelligentsia with the principles of Marxism-Leninism as interpreted by the party leaders' (Inkeles 1951:50-51). Self-study became 'the basic method for Marxist indoctrination', as self-study limited debate and discussion, and the press was given preference over oral propaganda (Inkeles 1951:52). CPSA stalwart, Rusty Bernstein, remembers that 'we all studied Marxism and read Lenin but we never debated it' (Bernstein [sa]). According to Bernstein ([sa]), this avoidance of ideological disputes was as a result of the damage wreaked on the party by the ideological quarrels of the 1930s.

The CPSA started publishing the theoretical journal *Freedom* in the late 1930s, and the visual representation of the intellectual appears in CPSA printed propaganda of the 1940s. The resolutions adopted at the National Conference of 1944 reports CPSA membership numbers in terms of a breakdown which includes a category for 'intellectuals' (CPSA 1944:6). Correll (1946: 45) identifies the party intellectuals 'drilled in Marxism' as George Findlay, Dr George Sacks and Professor HJ Simons, Glyn Thomas, Michael Harmel, Sol Buirski, Moses Kotane, and Hilda Watts. Most of these intellectuals contributed articles to the journal *Freedom*.

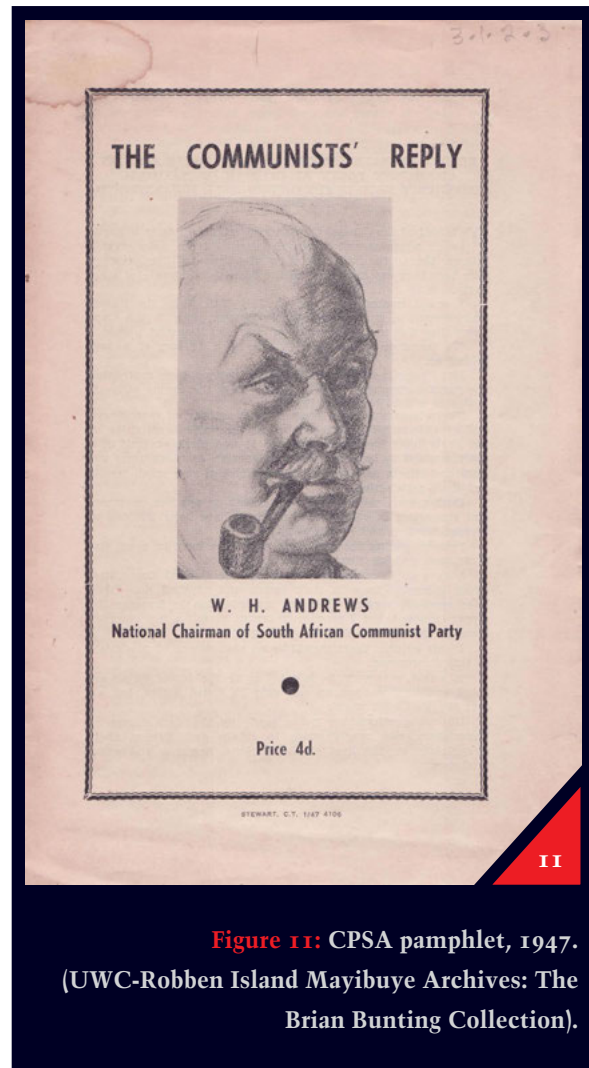


Figure 11: CPSA pamphlet, 1947. (UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives: The Brian Bunting Collection).

The leader

Photographic and illustrated images of both Lenin and Stalin appear in the CPSA propaganda during the war, with those of Stalin predominating. The frequency of the appearance of images of Stalin steadily increases in the issues of *Inkululeko* from 1941 and peaks in the copies from 1943 and 1945. Typical depictions of Stalin in *Inkululeko* include head-and-shoulders portraits, which show a striking man, dressed in a military jacket, with a square jaw, handsome moustache and an impressive head of hair (Figure 12). Stalin is depicted as the paragon of virile masculinity; he is indeed 'the man of steel'.



Figure 12: Photograph of Stalin from *Inkululeko* (02.1942:1).

Clark(1997:95) describes Stalin as 'short, fat and bandy-legged with a pock-marked face, narrow forehead, and withered left arm'; however, this reality is not reflected in the large numbers of official portraits of Stalin which were created in the Soviet Union, some of which were produced in huge sizes. Officially sanctioned images of Stalin found their way into the CPSA's printed propaganda and readers of *Inkululeko* could even order '[f]ine photographs of Joseph Stalin' in 1941 (*Inkululeko* 1941:11).

Other representations in *Inkululeko* show Stalin lighting his pipe – a representation which was earlier described as being associated with intellectualism, individualism and accepted masculine behaviour – or pictured with Lenin. The practice of placing Lenin and

Stalin within the same image originated in Soviet propaganda of the 1930s as an attempt to legitimise Stalin's leadership by linking him to Lenin (Clark 1981: 10). Certain images of Stalin assume iconographic features typical of Lenin, such as the outstretched arm and pointing finger as seen in Figure 13, which declares 'Stalin speaks' (Johannesburg District Committee of the CPSA 1943).

By taking on the iconographic features connected with Lenin, the association of Lenin as patriarch of the Soviet people is transferred onto Stalin. Bonnell (1997:165) notes that the title 'Father' is one of many used to describe Stalin in the 1930s, and that 'the immortalization of Lenin was surpassed in the 1930s by the veneration of Stalin, reminiscent in its form and content of the adoration of the saviour himself'. Stalinism tapped into the Tsar-worshipping tradition which had been fostered in Russian peasant folklore since medieval times, and many images depict 'Stalin as a benevolent patriarch showing him in the company of workers, soldiers or politicians upon whom he bestows his fatherly attention and words of wisdom' (Clark 1997:94-95). In certain instances Stalin's image is captioned with his military title 'Marshall.' After the War, images of Stalin in CPSA propaganda decreased considerably to between one and three appearances annually. Similarly, images of soldiers featured prominently during the War, only to disappear after peace was declared.

Soldiers

The linocuts from the 1930s represented soldiers in uniforms as enemies signifying only death, destruction and repression. Figure 14 depicts two monstrous soldiers – reminiscent of the work of the German Dada artist George Grosz – representing 'Boer' and 'British' imperialism standing guard over a crucified black Jesus symbolising the 'people'.

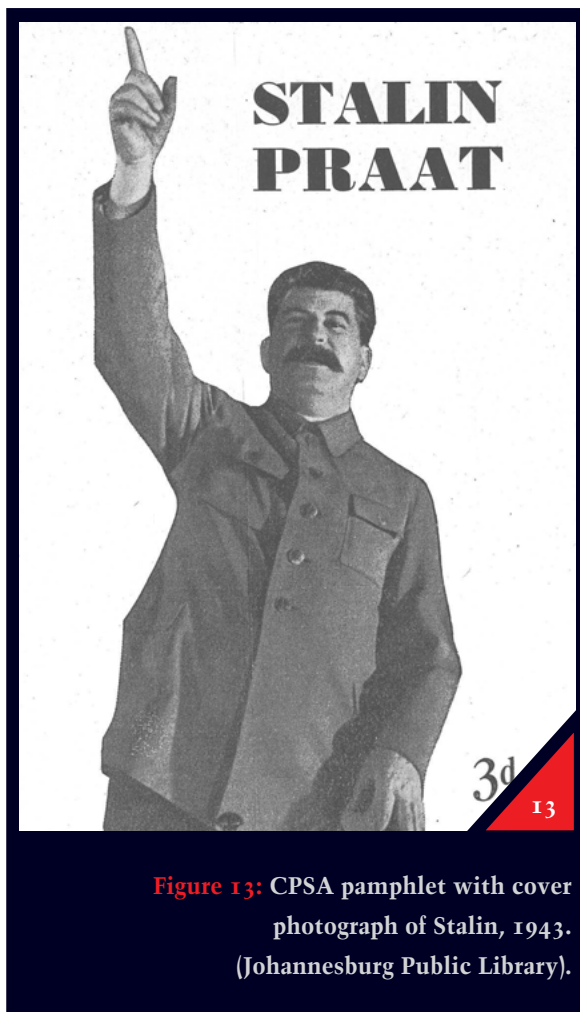


Figure 13: CPSA pamphlet with cover photograph of Stalin, 1943. (Johannesburg Public Library).



Figure 14: Cartoon from *Umsebenzi* (07.04.1933:1).

In contrast, the CPSA's World War II propaganda depicts soldiers as heroes. Two soldier heroes emerged during the war, namely the Red Army soldier and the African soldier. The Red Army, its soldiers, commanders and victories are extensively covered in the CPSA newspapers from the World War II period. *Inkululeko* (1943: 4) describes the Red Army as the 'army of the people', and informs readers on 'why the army of the Soviet Union is so powerful and brave'. The Red Army soldier is literally depicted as red and the five-pointed star – the symbol of the Red Army – appears frequently as part of the uniforms of the soldiers in images and is used as a stand alone element in poster and pamphlet designs.

The image of the Red Army soldier in CPSA propaganda is imported from Soviet propaganda and conforms

to stereotypical depictions of soldiers as heroes, as seen in Figure 15 (Cape District Committee of the CPSA 1941).

Soviet War propaganda is characterised by the style known as Socialist Realism, which typically creates heroes and heroines such as 'tireless labourers, courageous Red Army soldiers, diligent schoolchildren or dedicated party activists' (Clark 1997:87). Figure 15 exemplifies what Clark (1997:89-90) refers to as the 'formulaic forwards-and-upwards look' typical of Socialist Realism which 'signifies a temporal overlap in which the present is infused with the spirit of the future'.

The CPSA's support for the War became evident in the campaign to '[a]rm the non-European soldier' (Roux 1948:317), as seen in the poster in Figure 16 (Seidman 2007:30), which depicts an African soldier dressed in



Figure 15: CPSA poster, 1941. (SAHA, WITS).



Figure 16: CPSA poster, 1942. (Seidman 2007:30).

a khaki uniform and slouch hat and holding a spear, accompanied by the slogan 'Give him a Gun NOW! For Defence and Victory'. Similarly dressed African soldiers appear regularly in issues of *Inkululeko* and in CPSA pamphlets – for example, on the cover of the pamphlet titled *They Served Their Country* (Figure 17) (Scholtz 1945:cover page).

Killingray (2010:71-72) states that during World War II, 123,000 black, coloured and Indian troops served in the Cape Coloured Corps, the Indian and Malay Corps and the Native Military Corps, which amounted to 37 per cent of the entire Union Defence Force. African soldiers served in a variety of non-combatant roles such as guards, drivers, labourers, stretcher-bearers, military policeman, construction workers and hospital orderlies (Gleeson 1994:ix). African soldiers were not armed with guns, but were instead issued with assegais and knopkieries (Grundlingh 1986:24).

Historically, South African whites strongly opposed Africans carrying arms (Killingray 2010:71-72). During the War, General Jan Smuts maintained this status quo in an attempt to defuse the political tension between his United Party and the opposition National Party, as the parties strongly disagreed on the issues of South Africa participating in the War and the participation and arming of non-European soldiers (Friend 1995:157).

A 1942 cartoon (reproduced in Vernon 2000:84) by cartoonist Victor Ivanoff for the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Vaderland* (The Father Land), comments on Smuts's statement that African soldiers could be armed should South Africa be invaded. The cartoon reveals that the opposition to the carrying of arms by Africans was entrenched in a view of Africans as savages who were incapable of using firearms. The fact that spears, not guns, were considered appropriate weapons for African soldiers indicates a stereotypical view of Africans

as warriors, which was perpetuated in the mainstream press.

The *Springbok Record* (Klein 1946:32), a picture book commemorating the service of volunteers during World War II, contains two pages on the contribution of African soldiers under the heading 'Modern Warriors', stating: '[a]lthough not armed with rifles, these Bantu soldiers loved the pomp and ceremony of parade ground drill. With assegais instead of rifles, spick and span of uniform, they strode proudly in the footsteps of their warrior forebears'. Chetty (2005:42-44) notes the practice in the photographic magazine *Libertas*⁵ of showing pictures of African soldiers side by side with photos of Zulu warriors which framed the soldiers as 'Noble Warriors' who preserved life instead of taking it.

The image of the African soldier in European uniform links with the stereotype of the 'Native' recruited into the colonial army and serving the interests of European colonisers (Pieterse 1992:82-84). The khaki 'bushshirt' and trousers with ankle boots was the summer uniform of the Union Defence Force from 1940 to 1945, and members of the Native Military Corps were distinguished by their slouch hats. Slouch hats originated in Australia, and were also worn during the South African War by Boer and British soldiers (Friend 1995:117).

Khaki was selected as the colour for the British Army's service dress in 1902 (Ugolini 2007), and became firmly associated with British armed forces. During the First World War, British posters inquired from young women whether their 'boys' were 'wearing khaki' (Jobling & Crowley 1996:114). A semiotic analysis of a cover of *Paris-Match* magazine by Barthes (1993:116), which reveals how the cover promoted French colonialism, could equally be applied to the image of the African soldier in Figure 17 if the words French and France are replaced with British and Britain:



Figure 17: CPSA pamphlet, 1945. (UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives: The Brian Bunting Collection).

[o]n the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.

The same sentiment is echoed in the British recruitment poster *The British Commonwealth of Nations, Together* (reproduced in Aulich 2007:184), which shows men from different nations marching together dressed in khaki. The khaki uniform serves to 'display loyalty' and 'suppress individuality' (Ugolini 2007:161) and

to 'impress the beholder with the majesty of military office and induce young men to join the service' (Callaway 1993:238). This attitude was a far cry from the attempts by Britain to safeguard its colonial sartorial codes, especially that of military uniforms (Klopper 2007:331).

The heroic stance of the trumpet-blowing soldier is typical of attempts by the communists to create African soldier heroes. Photographs appear in *Inkululeko* (1944: 6) of African soldiers being awarded with 'the ribbon of the Africa star', a medal commemorating the North African victory. Such attempts at creating heroes out of African soldiers contrast starkly with previous sentiments expressed by the CPSA, for example, in a report on the proceedings of the Mendi Memorial Day which appears in a 1934 issue of *Umsebenzi* (1934:1). Mendi Memorial Day was held in memory of the 600 members of the 'Native Labour Contingent' who perished at sea on the transportation ship the Mendi during the First World War. The report states that:

[t]hese Africans were fooled into going to fight for 'King and Country', they whose country had been stolen from them by the white imperialists ... were grossly betrayed; they fought and died for a cause that was not theirs ... when the next war breaks out, Africans ... must not be duped like they were in 1914-18.

Considered in the light of this sentiment, the CPSA's glorification of African soldiers becomes ironic. It is also ironic that the khaki uniform and the slouch hat, signifiers for 'British and Boer imperialists', the prime enemies of the communists who are vilified in the cartoons of the 1930s, are drawn into service to support the communist cause in printed propaganda from the 1940s.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the impact of World War II on the CPSA and its production of printed propaganda was largely positive. During the War, party membership numbers increased, the audiences for party propaganda broadened and the volume and variety of printed propaganda grew. Perceptions of the party, as well as of its relationship with the South African State, improved considerably following the Soviet Union's entry into the War on the side of the Allied forces. As an 'ally' of the South African government, the party followed an 'accommodationist path', which was characterised by a toning down of policies, opposition to strikes, emphasis on reform rather than socialism, and the avoidance of confrontation with the government.

The War saw the figures of the gentleman, intellectual, leader and soldier emerge and predominate in the CPSA's printed propaganda. The emergence of the figure of the gentleman was ascribed to the development of closer ties between the ANC and the CPSA, and it was argued that the visual appearance of the gentleman expressed respectable values. The figure of the intellectual is related to the gentleman in appearance, and was described as projecting authority and showing the importance of rational thinking to the party and the role of intellectuals in furthering the party's cause. Repeated representations of military leaders and soldiers clearly displayed the CPSA's support for the War. Whereas images of Stalin, the leader, and the Red Army soldier framed this support as allied with the Soviet Union, the image of the African soldier dressed in khaki uniform aligned the CPSA with the South African and British governments. This association was ironic given that these governments were historically the enemies of the communists. The appearance

of the gentleman, intellectual, leader and soldier connoted respectability and conformity and contrasted starkly with the revolutionary character of the CPSA's printed propaganda from the first half of the 1930s.

Notes

- 1 This article is based on research appearing in Pretorius (2011) and supported financially by the National Research Foundation (NRF). Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and should not be ascribed to the NRF.
- 2 Despite the CPSA's position on strikes, the War saw a 'heightened level of unrest, particularly strike action' specifically owing to price inflation and its impact on economic growth (Alexander 2000:19, 22).
- 3 The most frequently depicted persons during the War were Edwin Mofutsanyana and then Alpheus Maliba, followed by Armstrong Msitshana and Dr Alfred Xuma.
- 4 See Edgar (2005) for a biography of Mofutsanyana.
- 5 *Libertas* was aimed at a white audience and focused on the white men and women 'who were considered key to the war effort' (Chetty 2005).
- 6 South African National Military History Museum, Johannesburg, exhibition visited on 21 August 2010.

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