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# Letter No. 4b to Abram Jakira and the Central Executive Committee of the CPA from Ludwig Katterfeld in Moscow, Oct. 22, 1922.

Document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 93, l. 69.

Oct. 22, 1922.

#4b

Dear Comsec [Jakira] and Cec:—

It is my duty to report regarding the activities of some of my conferrers.

First, regarding that telegram sent by Cook [Jim Cannon] about “returning with full instructions,” the fact was this: At one time a subcommittee told Cook [Cannon] that the American question would be placed upon the agenda of the next Executive Committee [of the Comintern] meeting, without promising him that there would be any new instructions, much less telling what those instructions would be. Cook [Cannon] then sent that cable as a *personal message* from him-

self.‡ When the Presidium met they refused to take the question up at all until the return of the special representative [Genrik Valetski]. Cook [Cannon] says that he then sent a cable immediately, that is just a few days after the first one, telling us that he would remain here.

Second, the attitude of Cook [Cannon] and Lansing [Arne Swabeck] is extremely hostile. They seem determined to continue the factional controversy here. They say openly that they do not believe my report of the Party’s actions, that nothing is yet settled, that all questions are still open for decision here, and that they will try to get the decisions of the [Aug. 1922 Bridgman] Convention and the CEC reversed.† However, I am just as confident as I was last year with Moore [John Ballam] that the position of our Party as presented

†- Katterfeld indicates that Jim Cannon, an incorrigible factionalist throughout his entire life, refused to accept the unanimous decision of the 1922 Bridgman Convention to ratify the agreement of the 8+3 member “Disarmament Commission” and to liquidate the fight between undergrounders (“Anti-Liquidation” faction) and adherents of steady and rapid legalization (“Independents”). The Bridgman convention unanimously reaffirmed a commitment to retain the primacy of an underground Communist Party of America and dealt a blow to Bedacht, Ruthenberg, Lovestone, and others advocating rapid legalization, deposing their majority on the CEC in favor of a new majority from the “Anti-Liquidation” group. It was this turn of fortunes against which the “Independents” Cannon and Swabeck railed.

‡- The Cannon cable was followed by a breathless memorandum to all groups of the CPA from Executive Secretary Jay Lovestone declaring: “We have just received word from the Executive Committee of the Communist International that the problems confronting the American Party have been fully considered at a special meeting set aside for that purpose.... Upon arrival of our representative all efforts will be made to have him tour the districts and fully acquaint the membership with the decisions of the Communist International. Whatever changes or modifications these instructions may necessitate in our present organizational plans or activities will be transmitted to you immediately upon receipt of same by the National Office of the Communist International [sic.]” The intent of this maneuver was clearly to cut off the so-called Goose Caucus at the pass, presenting it with a *fait accompli* at the forthcoming Bridgman Convention. Instead, with no micromanaging declaration of the Comintern forthcoming, the Goose Caucus won majority control of the Bridgman Convention and deposed Lovestone as Executive Secretary, electing a new majority which named Abram Jakira to the top post and sent Ludwig Katterfeld to Moscow to replace Cannon as the American party’s representative to ECCI.

by me will be endorsed.†

Cook [Cannon] and Lansing [Swabeck] seem to sense this too, since their constant argument is that the Party is no good, that it “hamper the real work,” that it is “controlled by foreign elements that do not understand American conditions,” etc. In this tune they are ably seconded by a regular anvil chorus, consisting of the Yel man [Sen Katayama?] whom we found here, Ella [Reeve Bloor], some of the X [TUEL] and Canadians, and H [Claude McKay] of the Race [African Blood Brotherhood].‡ The X woman from New York [Rose Wortis] is particularly skilled along this line. It makes me feel ashamed that we have such members to represent the organization.

Naturally all this slandering and knocking of our firm [the CPA] has some effect here. H [McKay] is particularly damaging, as the local people respect his ability and judgement and hope that he will come to us [the CPA] some day. H [McKay] is doing his best, not only to secure a monopoly for his field [work among American blacks], but also to break away the X [TUEL] from us [i.e., make it into an independent organization]. We must of course cooperate with him, but in doing so we must have no illusions. At present he has no use whatever for our organization, and would abolish it if he could.

Regarding Race [African Blood Brotherhood] I think we shall come to agreement pretty much along the lines agreed upon in NY, with the exception of his affiliation to Berlin. It is proposed that Race [ABB] handle the Berlin loans [receive CI funding] without actual affiliation [to the CPA]. Shall send agreement as soon as definite.

Cook [Cannon] and Lansing [Swabeck] at a meeting before I arrived here actually proposed dissolution of B [Friends of Soviet Russia] entirely, but did not get very far with that.

In X [TUEL] our friend H [McKay] wants our control abolished so that unions as such will affiliate with it. Lansing [Swabeck], the NYTU woman [Wortis], and the Chicago man [Jack Johnstone] oppose our present method because we “hamper the work through our mechanical control.” As a solution of the problem Lansing [Swabeck] proposes that “we must tear ourselves loose from this mechanical control.” They constantly refer to Ballister’s [Robert Minor’s] actions at the union convention in Chicago as an instance of mechanical control which hurt our work in the unions very much.

However, don’t worry. I feel sure it will come out OK.

*J. Carr [Ludwig Katterfeld].*

†- Reference is to the split of the “Central Caucus,” headed by the CEC minority of Ballam, Charles Dirba, and George Ashkenuzi. This group, including a substantial contingent of rank and file members from the “old” pre-merger CPA, split over the main issue of “raising” the entire party to legality as a parallel Legal Political Party, thus exposing the movement to state repression. Ballam took the fight to Moscow late in 1922, with CI Rep Katterfeld carrying the banner in Moscow for the CPA regulars.

‡- It is extremely unlikely that “H” is a reference to Otto Huiswood (“Billings”), as on Dec. 5 Katterfeld wrote a note to Huiswood in which it was clear that Huiswood was a factional ally (Goose Caucus) and that Huiswood would be assuming the role of CPA representative to ECCI “until another arrives.” Katterfeld was forced to leave Moscow for America to attend to his legal situation in Chicago and did not seek to turn the important ECCI seat over to either of his factional foes, Cannon or Swabeck. A non-party member of the African Blood Brotherhood in Moscow for the 4th Congress was Claude McKay. Although the meaning of the letter “H” is unclear in reference to McKay — the shortened form of some unknown pseudonym, probably — it is fairly certain that he is the black factional opponent about whom Katterfeld is muttering. McKay had resigned from the staff of *The Liberator* in June 1922 and proceeded to Moscow to attend the Comintern Congress.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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