
Letter No. 16 to the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party of America in New York from Israel Amter in Moscow, June 26, 1923.

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NO. 16

26/6/23.

To the CEC.

Dear Comrades:—

The CI conference is over [3rd Enlarged Plenum of ECCI: June 12-23, 1923] and was splendid. Very important decisions were made — but will get into detail in a letter in a few days. The Profintern is now on and I am attending with Charley [Karlis Janson]. I am sorry that you did not send me a [RILU] credential as I asked. Almost every country has more than one delegate. I am on 3 commissions nonetheless, nevertheless it is not so agreeable to be there without full rights. However, that is past. The Profintern will last about 4 or 5 days longer. On July 10 is the Youth Conference, which I will surely attend. We have given too little attention to the Youth movement, which MUST be fostered. It is the greatest hope of every Communist Party. But no more of that.

I want to mention one decision, however, that is very important: I got into the trade union resolution the clause that : “It is the duty of every member of the Communist International to join his union and work actively with the Communist faction, i.e. in the revolutionary opposition movement,” etc. etc. The English was not edited as it should have been, but that cannot be helped. That will be a great aid in getting the comrades to join. In fact it was pointed out that no one should be allowed to be a member unless he joins — that it should be regarded as a matter of course that he joins a union.

And now I want to say that the American party stands high in the CI. We received praise on all sides.

Zinoviev mentioned the fact several times in his report on the Party’s situation that the American party without any suggestion from the CI adopted the slogan of the “Workers’ and Farmers’” government, showing that we had broadened the idea and wished to get under the immediate influence of the Communists not only the workers but also the farmers. The English translation of the “Arbeiter and Bauernregierung” is “Workers’ and Peasants’ Government,” but it was distinctly understood that although that slogan is universal, we had modify it to read either “Workers’ and Farmers’” or “Workers’ and Working Farmers’” government. I stood for Working Farmers for the reasons that we have given in the States.

Later in the discussion with the Norwegian comrades, who do not want to accept democratic centralism, I mentioned the interference of the CI in the affairs of the American party last year and said that it was most wholesome and effective. In adding some humorous remarks about me — to the effect that I was in that section of the party that did not believe that we could have an open party in the United States at the present time — Kuusinen spoke of the wonderful vigor that the American party has manifested.

Then there has been unstinted praise of the work of the TUEL — both the CI and the Profintern. The written report of Lozovsky on the American situation is splendid. Johnson [Karlis “Charley” Janson] let himself be carried away by his enthusiasm and exaggerated things so that, you may have seen in the Pravda, Lozovsky pulled him down. It is a pity Lozovsky’s report has been printed in full and Johnson’s [Janson’s] given but brief space — that is the case with all delegates. But Lozovsky’s reproach was justified, since Johnson [Janson] did what he did in 1920. However,

let me say that the TUEL is regarded as a model for the work it is carrying on for amalgamation, and is recommended to all the other sections of the Profintern for its activity and tactics. We have every reason to be satisfied this year — every reason to feel that we have made *great and real* progress. So much about the two conferences. In a few days I will send you a review of the CI and a detailed report; also about the Profintern conference.

***** [Finances].†

Just got your letter of June 10 (you too should number your letters so that I can tell whether I get them all). Your complaint about this matter is justified. I just had a talk with Piatnitsky and the commission that takes up such matters agreed that the next quarter would go forward at once. The next will go forward ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE SENT A STATEMENT. Piatnitsky says he has asked for it several times, and I wrote you also. They are very particular about ***** [finances],‡ since experience with other countries, especially England, has been terrible. So sent the statement AT ONCE and the third quarter will go forward, without delay.

As regards ***** - ***** will take it up at once, also will see Lozovsky about it as soon as the Profintern conference is over.§ I believe that in view of the general recognition that our work has been first class that our [funding] request will be granted. I will make it especially strong. However, I want to point out that I have never exaggerated a single thing about the party and that every statement could be substantiated in fact. As regards what is promised in regard to the Daily [a matching grant to found an English newspaper], *you may go ahead*. As I wrote they are willing to do everything in that regard as soon as they see that

the party is making an effort [to raise funds also]. I myself proposed that what they would do for us should be done only when and if we did our share — as stated. They accepted. I knew that would spur on our members to greater efforts. No doubt you have also received Zinoviev's letter and that means business. So do not delay — proceed with the campaign so that we can have the paper out on the date fixed by you and us [Nov. 7, 1923]. They have confidence in us now — they see that the party is making splendid strides and will help us. If you had heard what has been said at the conference, you would not hesitate.

Books.

The book proposition is practically arranged. Got the cable calling for schoolbooks and catalogs and it will be attended to. However, the State Publishing House [Gosizdat] demanded a guarantee, since credit up to \$5,000 was asked. You are sending the first amount and it is understood that payments will be made regularly. As they have had bad experiences, they demanded a guarantee. The CI is giving that guarantee until you make a payment so that the publishers will see that the books are really going to be paid for, and then it will be released. In any case they will only send the last quarter when the time is up. So get busy on the payments.

<6 letters illeg.>

He declares that he agreed to pay his trip over here, but not home since he did not have enough. You will have heard by cable about this, in all probability, but will write so that there will not be any delay. His interpretation of CER's [Ruthenberg's] cable was that you *do not want* him to return. I do not believe that,

†- Original has "fractions code," *eight letters*, subject: 41/7 1/3 1/2 3/1 3/3 2/5 3/11 3/10. Topic discussed clearly deals with a quarterly appropriation from the Comintern to the WPA. "Finances" fills in the blanks nicely, just a wild guess.

‡- The exact same eight letters of "fractions code," an amateurish blunder: 41/7 1/3 1/2 3/1 3/3 2/5 3/11 3/10.

§- "Fractions code," first word: *nine letters*, subject: 3/1 10/6 1/3 4/3 3/2 1/5 1/2 5/1 11/4.

Second word: *four letters*, noun: 7/1 9/1 12/4 13/12. Could be "ECCI," but if my guess in a footnote to follow is correct, the code lays out so that this word is a name that begins "HE--." Aww, probably screwed up...

The CP "fractions code" works off a simple code/decode grid (several different used over time) with no mathematical tweaking of the plain text; thus the first letter in this word is the same as the fourth letter in the very first coded word, and the third letter is the same as the second in that first word. Repeating coded digits in a single message is a terrific blunder, since solving the code/decode grid is akin to solving a crossword puzzle and each repeated character is a solid clue.

These coded words clearly deal with monetary appropriations to the WPA and Amter going to see ECCI about it.

since he is a valuable comrade. Of course he wants to remain here, as he has prospects of a good position and thinks this is the time to get in, if at all. However, you gave him a limited furlough and I interpret it as meaning that you want him back. If it actually is that he has no money, I will have it advanced and he will have to pay it back.

YCL.

*** _ ***** was sent to them together with a somewhat smaller lot to you.† They were sent together because there was no address for the YCL. But I wrote you distinctly that it was intended for them. You wrote to Piatnitsky that you had received what is coded and a blank for something else. That was for the young folds and they have written asking what has become of it. I am greatly interested in the YCL, and believe that we must give our GREATEST ATTENTION TO IT. It is the hope of the immediate future of the party. Therefore we must foster it in every way and not hinder it in its work. So please see to it that they get what is coded.

TA [Technical Aid Society], Kuzbas, X [TUEL], Idgescom [??].

Glad to hear that we had no trouble at the TA [Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia] convention and that it is safely in our hands. Also particularly glad that the STO [Council of Labor and Defense] resolution was to your satisfaction and was adopted unanimously. Am asking STO for complete support of new bureau. Also will arrange for the character of organization and propaganda next week after Profinintern. I hope that this disagreeable chapter is now closed.

Kuzbas [Kuznets Basin development program]. Wrote to [S.J.] Rutgers about combining the NY office with the X [Trade Union Educational League]. He is for it, recognizing the necessity of [consolidating?] our

work and for economy. He thinks that it may be necessary not to take the steps till the affair in New York is cleared up — which is correct. He will be here in August and we will discuss details.

X [TUEL]. Read about the trouble and received your cable. That is the stupid enthusiasm about [Upton] Sinclair, which I cannot fully understand. Sinclair is regarded as a splendid propagandist against capitalism here in Russia. Then he was arrested and they began to rave about it, sending telegrams of protest, etc. I thought ti about time to let them know who Sinclair really is. The *Pravda* refused to print the article — also the *Inprecorr*. They feel they can use him and are doing so. But the X [TUEL] had to suffer. I hope that things have cleared up.

Idgescom [???]. The matter was to be taken up at the Berlin conference, but it seems that Raskin arrived too late. I will take it up from here. There must be a merger of all these organizations in America.

Got a letter from Will [Weinstone?] from Berlin. Of course I was surprised. He expects to leave next week. Tracht. [Alexander Trachtenberg] will leave here soon but may have to go to the Caucuses, as he has salt deposits in his system. Or he may remain in Berlin for a time.

Party Literature.

Jay's [Lovestone's] book has not reached here yet.‡ The *Freiheit* is coming again, but not the *Volkszeitung*. Too few copies of *LH* [*The Labor Herald*, organ of TUEL] arrive here. The papers you ordered for me do not arrive at all. Cannon's and Ware's pamphlets I have not received.§ One of Cannon's reached CI.

Send ALL OUR papers to the "MOPR c/o Comintern." This is the International Political Prisoners' Relief and they wish to keep in touch with things happening in the US. Papers to the CI do not reach more than one department, unless addressed to the special departments.

†- "Fractions code," first word: *three characters, number or adjective*: 1/5 2/1 9/1... Second word: *eight letters, noun*: 4/3 7/1 6/3 7/4 2/3 3/1 3/3 10/6. Probable reference is to a shipment of literature or money. In playing with this code for ten minutes, including a word I know from another document, I have a guess for the the second word as "THOUSAND," with the second letter of the first word problematically being an "N." I guess that could be "ONE," now that I think about it... Have fun with it, codebreakers!

‡- Jay Lovestone, *The Government — Strikebreaker: A Study of the Role of the Government in the Recent Industrial Crisis*. (NY: Workers Party of America, May 1923).

§- James P. Cannon, *The Fifth Year of the Russian Revolution: A Report of a Lecture*. (NY: Workers Party of America, n.d. [1922]); Clarissa S. Ware, *The American Foreign-Born Workers*. (NY: Workers Party of America, n.d. [1923]).

Send copies of EVERYTHING to [Edvard] Varga. This is MOST IMPORTANT. Do not fail to attend to this as it is highly essential that he receive all our publications. This is more important than that the CI receive them. This is not exaggeration, so take it in hand. He wants new Socialist Party publications also. If necessary he will pay for them.

Send the *American Junior Red Cross* to the "Internationaler Jugend-Verlag, Berlin-Schoeneberg, Feurigstrasse 63. Fuer Archiv Moskau." They would like to receive it regularly.

The Worker looks fine these days. The Party certainly is most active. The campaign among the miners has been great. Note what you say about the SP being afraid of us in the FLP [Farmer-Labor Party] conference. Pity about the JF [Jewish Federation] trouble. Hope that it will not cause any conflict or strife.

Note status of Ruth's [Ruthenberg's] case. Am wondering what has been done in Ben's [Gitlow's] case — as that will be decisive for all the others.†

CI Program.

The CI Conference demands that each party furnish drafts or projects of a program for the CI, the resolution calling for a theoretical section and a section for the immediate demands. The national programs are also to be sent in. Do not neglect this. More explicit directions will come through other channels.

Credentials.

Subkoff, of the TA CB [Central Bureau of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia] has arrived here and of course wants to get into the CPR [Russian Communist Party]. What is his status? I refused to give him anything because he admitted that he was under charges and was suspended. His wife said that she was to be given a credential but had to leave before it arrived. Let me know about her also.

Olgo Laukki, formerly member of the UCP in Detroit and New York, from Nov. 1920 to Sept. 1921, is here and wants to get a credential. [Leo] Laukki, the Finnish comrade, who was a member of the UCP, is here and asked for her transfer.

Negroes.

The conference has decided on, to take place at the time of the 5th Congress of the Comintern, which will be in March 1924. A manifesto will be issued soon and directions given for each party of the countries having Negroes to begin work. The plans will fit in very well with those already stated by you — being merely an extension. I notice that the SP has issued a pamphlet by [James] Oneal called *The Next Emancipation*. They get <illeg.> on us in too many things, taking up and utilizing our ideas. We have got to beat them at it: we should issue a pamphlet at 10¢ — theirs is 15¢ — and give it wide distribution.

International Political Prisoners' Aid.

This is the MOPR [*Mezhdunarodnaia Organizatsiia Pomoshchi bortsam Revoliutsii*] which complains that connections with you are very poor. It is necessary to centralize and coordinate all the prisoners' relief activities so that international actions can be achieved.

They ask us the following:

1. That in addition to the campaign that you are carrying on for our political prisoners, you start a campaign for some international cause: either for the Ruhr victims or victims of the Italian Fascisti. They feel convinced that you will be able to enroll the support of wide masses of workers who will not respond so readily to a national appeal. Besides, in spite of my telling them that we are having difficulty in getting the workers to think in terms of America, they feel that we have no right to absolve ourselves of international obliga-

†- Reference is to the trials for violation of the Michigan Criminal Syndicalism Act ensuing from the raid on the August 1922 Convention of the CPA in Bridgman, Michigan. The trial of first defendant William Z. Foster resulted in a mistrial; the second trial, that of Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg, resulted in a conviction. Amter sees the question of whether a third prosecution was launched, this time with Benjamin Gitlow in the dock, as pivotal for the rest of the CP cadres embroiled in the affair. Prosecutors ultimately decided to let the appeals process on the Ruthenberg case work its way through the system before deciding whether to commit to additional time-consuming and costly court proceedings. The matter was ultimately decided against Ruthenberg by the US Supreme Court, but he never served time in the case, nor were additional prosecutions conducted against other defendants.

tions. Besides whatever money is collected will be of tremendous value to the countries with low valuta.

2. I told them about the German collection that was made for the Ruhr and they know about the Hungarian collection. Of course they appreciate both, but have an objection to the manner in which it was distributed. They demand that all funds that are collected for relief be forwarded to Moscow — so that we will have a centralized institution, just as the IWR [International Workers' Relief] is. The Moscow office — the MOPR — will see to it that in the course of time, all the funds that are transmitted will reach the place intended. But only in the course of time. They say that it is wrong that one place should be furnished with abundant funds, while others — which might happen at the moment to be in far more stringent circumstance — would get nothing. Furthermore if funds go direct there can never be the surety that they will be properly disbursed. This is extremely important. Hence the necessity of centralization and full accounting.

3. In order that this may be effected, the national bodies must be affiliated with the international organization. This means that the Party must endorse the MOPR, the LDC [Labor Defense Council] and NDC [National Defense Council] should affiliate. I think Ruth. [Ruthenberg] wrote that you are considering this matter. It should be settled.

4. I am sending you a copy of the journal that they issue. It is in Russian. There is no doubt that it can be sold among the Russian population for 10¢. they want to know how many you can use, since every penny they get in will help in the relief.

5. They ask that you furnish pictures of acts of terrorism, of <illeg.>, of prisons (inside and outside), prisoners, etc.

I am sending you some material on the terror that exists in different countries. It should be sent to all our papers and issued through the WP press service.

Azerbaijan Party.

Representative of this section of the Party was here and asks that you consider the letter I am sending you. They are extremely anxious to have information about the movement in the US regularly and will furnish us with material in return.

He asks particularly for an exchange of papers and would like to have the *Worker, Freiheit, Volkszeitung*, and *Novyi Mir*. Please put them on the list — address is on the letter.

This is all for today. Best regards to everybody.

Fraternally,

Grove [Israel Amter].

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