
Report to the Executive Committee of UCP of America by a Delegate from the Communist Labor Party to the 2nd Congress of the Communist International. [circa September 1920]

by Alexander Bilan †

Five page document in DoJ/FBI Investigative Files, NARA M-1085, reel 939, no doc. number.

John Reed having been disconnected with the organization and the Party not having received any word from him for a long time, I was sent by the Executive Committee of the Communist Labor Party to Moscow. I found that John Reed had just been arrested in Finland. Previous to his departure he had reached an agreement with the representative of the Communist Party that both the Communist and Communist Labor Parties shall unite.‡ This agreement was accepted by the Executive of the Communist International. I do not know what instructions the delegate from the Communist Party [Anderson] carried, but I know that the instructions of my Party gave me full powers to act on the matter of unity. The delegate of the Communist Party [Anderson] received instructions from the Executive of the International to depart for the US and act as an intermediary on the question of unity between both Parties. Immediately after arriving in Stockholm, he cabled the Executive that he did not feel in a position to act as an intermediary, demanding from the Communist International to send

another authorized comrade or appoint a Committee. He never mentioned what he intended doing with the material support which was in his possession and which he was instructed to turn over to the United Communist Party. IN THE NAME OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, I DEMAND THAT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED COMMUNIST PARTY MAKE AN INQUIRY, FIRST OF THE EXECUTIVE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THEN OF THE DELEGATE [Anderson] TO ASCERTAIN TO WHOM HE DELIVERED THE MATERIAL SUPPORT GIVEN HIM FOR THE UNITED COMMUNIST PARTY.§

At the opening of the Second Congress of the Communist International [July 19, 1920] there were present three delegates from the Communist Labor Party and two delegates from the Communist Party. They recognized the necessity for a united Communist movement in the United states and therefore signed a joint statement that they would work together regardless of the existence of two Parties in the United

†- Alexander Bilan (née Kadikis) was born in Riga, Latvia, then part of Imperial Russia, in 1886. He was a member of the Social Democracy of Latvia from 1903 to 1910, eventually being arrested and exiled to Siberia by the Tsarist secret police. Bilan escaped from exile to London before proceeding to the United States, where he joined the Socialist Party of America and wrote for various Latvian language papers. Bilan was a delegate to the state conventions of the Socialist Party of Ohio in 1918 and 1919 and was prominent in the Left Wing movement in the SPA during those years. He was a delegate to the National Left Wing Conference in New York City in June 1919. At the end of August 1919, Bilan became a founding member of the Communist Labor Party and served on the first National Executive Committee of that organization. He was later sent by the CLP to attend the 2nd World Congress of the Communist International [July 19-August 7, 1920]. The CLP merged with the Ruthenberg faction of the CPA to form the United Communist Party at a convention held at the Wolfskeel Resort in Bridgman, MI, May 26-31, 1920, and it was thus to the Central Executive Committee of this organization that he made this report upon his return, probably in September of 1920.

‡- John Reed signed this agreement with the Latvian-American John A. Anderson (née Kristap Beika) in Moscow on Jan. 20, 1920. §- Reed and Anderson were both issued diamonds and foreign currency for transmission to their ostensibly united Communist Party in America in January 1920. Neither made it successfully to America with their valuable cache — Reed being arrested in Finland, with the contents of his contraband-laden coat published in the press; Anderson losing his nerve and abandoning his packets during

States. With the arrival at the Congress of the delegate from the United Communist Party, we, the delegation of the Communist Labor Party, laid our credentials before the only accredited delegate from the United Communist Party, claiming our seats as associate delegates for the United Communist Party, because our Party as a whole merged in the United Communist Party.† The Communist Party delegates, who at the opening of the Congress signed a joint statement claiming that they were for a united party, on arrival of the delegate from the United Communist Party turned around and declared that they could only represent the Communist Party and could not recognize the United Communist Party. The right of the Communist Party to continue to represent the Communist movement of the US was challenged by the delegate of the United Communist Party on the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee, considering this challenge and taking into consideration that the Congress was drawing to its end and that the Communist Party delegates had participated in sessions of the Congress; further that there was no time left to verify the minutes of the Unity Convention [May 26-31, 1920], recognized the Communist Party as the minor party and gave them four votes in the Congress, with the understanding that the Executive

Committee of the Communist International should be instructed to send a word to the Communist Party to unite, and unless they did unite they would not be recognized by the Communist International. The United Communist Party was given six votes, the rest of the entire vote for the United States. The Executive Committee of the Communist International in its first session set the time by which unity shall be had as October 10, 1920, and instructed the returning delegates that they shall carry this decision into effect. If the Communist Party refuses to obey the decisions of the Communist International, then the only recognized Party will be the United Communist Party of America.

The Second Congress of the Communist International was a body which for the first time could speak with authority in the name of the most prominent and best known Communists the world over. They were gathered in Moscow to work out and lay down the tactics and the rules for the entire International movement and to make them binding on every Communist the world over. The thesis on National and Colonial questions accepted by the Congress shows explicitly that world Imperialism is fighting the working class as a centralized force, suppressing the subjugated nations of undeveloped countries and by their

his harrowing border crossing (Anderson was brought up on party charges for his failure by the CPA in March of 1921).

This should have been the end of the story, but unfortunately it was not. In their repulsive Swiftboat Veterans for Truth/Ann Coulter-style smear-a-thon, *In Denial: Historians, Communism and Espionage* [2003], John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr cited the Comintern record of the disbursements to John Reed and John Anderson (RTsKhIDNI f. 495, op. 82, d. 1, list unspecified) which they previously published in their 1995 documents collection, *The Secret World of American Communism* (pp. 22-24) as axiomatic proof of a massive, seven-figure, underwriting of American Communist operations in 1920. That Haynes, Klehr, and their Russian associate Fridrikh Firsov have misinterpreted inflation-era nominal ruble-values in this archival document is patently obvious. About half the listed value was given to Reed — and he never made it home intact! The loss of Reed's Comintern valuables in Finland (itemized in the contemporary press, worth in the ballpark of \$25,000 in the dollars of the day) is well known; the loss of the approximately equal contraband of Anderson less well so. Neophyte bungling of nominal ruble values aside, a check written does not equal a check cashed. That all available archival evidence indicates a modestly subsidized and chronically broke Communist movement during its first several years seems to not to have troubled Messrs. Haynes and Klehr in the least as to the veracity of their document interpretation and the tendentious assertions thereupon levied. Instead, one critic attempting to challenge Haynes' and Klehr's ludicrous assertion of a seven-figure subsidy (in 1920 dollars) in a internet newsgroup was degraded in print as a person who "literally didn't know what he was talking about" for wrongly guessing the word *valiuta* rather than *tsennosti* was the Russian word in the original (correctly rendered as "values" by Firsov in the 1995 collection). One shakes one's head in bemused wonderment at the blind, hyperventilating rage shat upon the world in the pages of *In Denial*. Borrowing an archaic-but-applicable phrase from the late Clara Peller: "Where's the beef, gentlemen?" Doth not the evidence undermine thine right wing polemic in this instance? Is not a formal retraction of one's silly claims and an apology due to one (of the many) viciously smeared by your foul book?

†- Theodore Draper's book *The Roots of American Communism* [1957] lists just two delegates to the 2nd Congress of the CI from each the CPA (Alexander Stoklitsky, Louis Fraina) and the CLP (John Reed, Alexander Bilan). The official stenographic report of the 2nd Congress includes record of a third CLP delegate, Eadmonn MacAlpine, who spoke at length on July 28, 1920, and briefly on August 3. Bilan thus confirms MacAlpine's inclusion as a formal member of the CLP delegation. The unnamed UCP delegate whose arrival the midst of the proceedings effectively split the 5 members of the CPA and CLP delegations was Edward Lindgren ["Flynn"].

suppression drawing the recourse for suppressing the working class movement in capitalistically developed countries. Therefore, the International Communist Movement is forced to fight Imperialism in a strong, centralized body, strongly disciplined, receiving orders for action from one center. The Communist International recognizes the necessity for a strong Executive which gives orders to be carried out by all sections of this fighting organization. To combat Imperialism, the forces of the organized Communist Movement shall be given in support of the vast masses of the suppressed nations. In this way, weakening the forces of Imperialism in backward countries and at the same time strengthening the revolutionary movement in capitalistic developed countries. Basing the struggle on this precalculation, the Congress realized the necessity of adopting statutes for the International organization demanding that Communists in all countries shall subordinate themselves in general tactical questions and in discipline to the Executive of the Communist International, which [is to be] the superior body of the International in times between Congresses. The Communist Party in each country is considered as a section of the Third International.

The existence of fighting organizations logically calls for the need in every country of illegal organizations. Organization which is preparing itself at the end to take the power from the ruling class by armed insurrection can not expose itself and its plans to its enemy.

The duty of a Communist Party in every country is twofold: First, to use all means and channels to revolutionize the masses and secondly, to build up its organization and prepare itself to be ready to lead the masses in the advent of an outbreak. For the purpose of effective organization, strict discipline has to be inaugurated to train the members to carry out and obey the orders given by the Party. Every Communist at the same time ought to be a propagandist and agitator himself. Therefore, theoretical groups shall be established so that every member may become clear on principles and tactics and the discipline of the Party. As an illegal organization we shall have our members in every government institution distributed in all strategic points of the state machinery. We have to use those points for the benefit of our organization in safeguarding it, informing it, and in the time of insurrection to

put those comrades in charge of those various departments. The Communist Party as an illegal organization shall be present in every place where there occurs any activity concerning the social life of society. It shall be invisible, unapproachable, all informed. The capitalist should feel the "Red Spook" everywhere, in their factories, banks, in their meetings of boards of directors, in their chambers of commerce, in their Manufacturers' Associations, in their diplomatic corps, their Patriotic Legions, in their Intelligence Departments, on every battleship, in every army and aviation division, etc. The capitalists are the greatest conspirators, why should not we use the same weapon to beat our enemy or at least to be informed about their plotting against the working class?

To revolutionize the masses and bring them closer to the moment of revolution, we have to carry on our propaganda using all possible means. Insofar as vast masses are still participating and believe in parliamentary elections, we shall not ignore the value of the mass interest and turn its attention by showing the futility to better its condition through this institution. If possible, we shall elect our representatives in parliament to create in it public scandal denouncing and discrediting through it the capitalist government, and give a revolutionary education to those who still believe in parliament.

In as much as the greater part of the organized workers still believe and obey the orders of the reactionary Trade Unions, we as Communists shall take part in those organizations and if not possible to capture and use them for revolutionary propaganda, try to break the form of organization if necessary by large mass splits from it and so draw all revolutionary labor organizations under the banner of the "Red International of Industrial Organizations," which will be organized as a section of the Communist International, in opposition to the yellow [Labor] International of Amsterdam.

I have to state that the American and the British delegates at the Congress had a bitter fight to convince the Congress that the thesis demanding that all Communists shall stay in the reactionary Trade Unions and try to capture them and then use them for revolutionary propaganda was not applicable to the American and British labor movement. The form of the organization itself makes it impossible to use them for

revolutionary propaganda. Regardless of our arguments, the thesis was carried that all Communists shall stay in the reactionary labor organizations and try to capture them. The only possibility for the American Communist movement to do any revolutionary work with the Labor movement is by accepting this thesis, with the amendment which permits exceptions for some countries declining strictly to follow the rule.

The Communist Commonwealth can only be established through the application of Proletarian Dictatorship, which means that there will be a necessity to organize a Red Army to combat the counterrevolutionary forces and to safeguard the achievements of the revolution. Therefore, the Communists have to be acquainted with the techniques and strategies of modern warfare. At least, every Communist has to know how to handle a gun and how to form a fighting line. This is calling for the establishment of gymnasiums and shooting galleries for services. In the Communist Commonwealth Proletarian Culture will have its widest possibilities for the development of its own art, etc. The Communists should not ignore the possibilities even under the capitalistic system to draw around them the best artists and musicians and start a nucleus of such an organization immediately.

The Young People's organizations in many countries are and were carrying the brunt of the revolution on their shoulders and are playing an important role in the Communist movement. Therefore we have to pay attention that such organizations under trained

Communist leadership shall be established.

To carry on the Communist propaganda and to educate the members of the organization, the Executive Committee of the Communist International has instructed me to inform the United Communist Party to begin immediately to translate and publish all the latest books and pamphlets on the tactical and theoretical questions of communism.

The following books shall be immediately published:

ABC of Communism, by N. Bukharin.

The Infantile Sickness of Leftism in Communism, by N. Lenin.

Terrorism and Communism, by L. Trotsky.

Economics of the Transition Period, by N. Bukharin.

Also, the Executive expressed the desire that the United Communist Party should publish the *Communist International*, the official organ of the Communist International. Also all the theses of the Second Congress shall be published and distributed amongst the members as soon as they reach the Party.

In pursuing this work of publication, the United Communist Party will receive all support from the Executive of the Communist International.

Delegated from the Communist International.

William Morgan [Alexander Bilan].

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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