
Letter from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York to Vasil Kolarov in Moscow, February 17, 1923.

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 201, ll. 9-10.
German translation in same *delo*, *listy* 11-13.

February 17, 1923

W. Kolarov, General Secretary
Moscow, Russia

Dear Comrade:—

A situation has arisen in regard to the appeals for relief for Soviet Russia which the Central Executive Committee of the party believes should be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee of the CI.

Our party attitude on the question of relief has been definitely established in the work we have done. The Friends of Soviet Russia has collected three-quarters of a million dollars for relief. Considering the strength of our party this is a herculean achievement. The money was not, of course, collected from our party members only, although the party members have given generously. The collection, however, was made possible through the work of our party members in organizing the work of collection. For over a year our party organization was almost entirely turned into a relief organization. All of our party organizations were starved because so large a part of the party strength and of the money which could be collected from the members and from our circle of sympathizers was being given for relief.

This condition has been modified to some extent in recent months through measures taken by the party, but a large part of the party energy and strength is still going into the relief work. This is as it should be and we do not complain because of the existing situation.; But we do object to new burdens being thrown upon us in this respect.

This protest is called forth by the fact that there has just arrived in this country a comrade, who was a delegate to the Profintern congress, with a mandate from the governing body of the Volunteer Fleet to organize a collection in this country for the Volunteer Fleet. This comrade, a non-party member named Kasin, was a delegate to the Profintern Congress from the Russian Sailors Union.

There are two grounds for our protest against the issuance of this mandate:

1) There are now in existence three organizations for relief of Soviet Russia — the FSR, the Technical Aid, and the Yidgescom — which are raising funds among the party members and its circle of sympathizers. These organizations absorb all the money which the party and its circle of sympathizers can raise. To add another organization which will make appeals to the same party members and sympathizers is to place a burden on us which we cannot carry.

2) Our effort has been to have all relief work centralized in the Friends of Soviet Russia. To that end, measures are being taken to make the Technical Aid a department of the FSR and we desire also to achieve the same end so far as the Yidgescom is concerned. The need of such centralization is so obvious that argument in support of our position seems unnecessary. Yet it is proposed through the mandate for a collection for the Volunteer Fleet to set up yet another organization alongside of these which already exist.

We have refused to give any support and have forbidden our party members to give support to the proposed Volunteer Fleet collection organization until we receive further instructions from the Executive Committee.

We propose, to prevent further occurrences of

this character, that the Executive Committee take the following steps:

1) That all mandates authorizing relief collections in the United States by departments of the Soviet Government pass through the hands of the Executive Committee for approval.

2) That such mandates be transmitted to the FSR, through the Ausland committee, and it organize the collection in place of new organizations being created each time an appeal is to be made.

The above proposals, of course, are not intended to apply to the Russian-American Industrial Corporation and its work, which the party is now supporting with all its strength.

Fraternally yours,

C.E. Ruthenberg,
Executive Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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