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# Letter No. 6 to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from C.E. Ruthenberg in New York, February 6, 1923. †

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 181, ll. 20-25.

*Letter #6*

February 6, 1923.

To the **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COM-  
INTERN**

Dear Comrades:—

1. The Central Executive Committee of the CP of A agrees with the Statement that the CI has sent to the American Party for its guidance in transforming the Party into an open party. The CEC has decided unanimously to carry out without reservation the instructions embodied in the Statement. In fact, as the CI has already been informed, some time before the Statement, the CEC decided to take steps to convert the Party into an open Party. The political development of the past five months,‡ together with the experience acquired in the activities of the LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY, have convinced the CEC that an open existence of the Party is possible. The CEC is pleased, therefore, that its decision has been confirmed by the instructions of the CI.

2. We believe that the CI has again demonstrated its understanding of the American situation and its ability to give concrete directions for the activities of the American Party. In the past year there have been three manifestations of the needs of the American

movement: (a) The formation of the WP; (b) The unity effected at the last convention; and later — (c) The Open Party.

3. The representative of the CI did work that proved to be not only good, but of tremendous value for the future of the Party.§ The unity achieved has been real, for the three factions have changed during the following months and disappeared as factions. The Theses of the Convention have destroyed the dogma that the CP of A can exist only as an underground Party.

4. We must inform the CI that, since the Convention, the entire Party, and especially the CEC of the Party, has worked in fullest harmony, without any factionalism. During these months there has been no factional voting in the CEC. For that reason, we cannot agree with some statements made by the American delegates to the Fourth Congress [of the CI], who were not aware of the changed situation in the Party. This disagreement applies to all the delegates. We must state that these statements were not the opinions of the CEC, but were a reflection of a factional spirit of factions that no longer exists. The majority at the Convention is today a convinced supporter not only of the Labor Party but also of the Open Party. The Conventional minority is today the protagonist in the campaign for the protection of foreign-born workers.

†- A date stamp on the original indicates this document was received by the Comintern on March 10, 1923.

‡- That is, since the Second National Convention of the Communist Party, held at Bridgman, Michigan from Aug. 17-22, 1922. The convention itself was prematurely terminated on August 21 when law enforcement authorities accidentally tipped their presence. The convention participants, who included a police spy, were unable to complete evacuate the premises prior to the raid of the gathering, which was conducted at 10 o'clock on the morning of August 22nd.

§- Reference is to Genrik Valetskii (Polish spelling: Henryk Walecki). Born as Maximilian Horvitz in 1877, Valetskii was one of the founding organizers of the Communist Party of Poland. He was the representative of the Polish CP to the ECCI from 1921 to 1925. Valetskii was sent to the United States early in 1922 as the Comintern's representative to the American Party, where he helped broker the reintegration of the Central Caucus faction into the CPA at the August 1922 Bridgman Convention. From 1928, Valetskii was the deputy head of the Balkan Department of ECCI. Valetskii was a victim of Soviet Secret Police terror in 1938.

The former opposition comrades are most active Party workers in the WP and are doing excellent pioneer work toward an Open Party.†

5. We wish to inform the CI of the important reasons that have impelled the CEC to work in the direction of an Open Party consistently and with energy. We state openly that the reasons are not organizational reasons. Dualism between the Party and the WP has been inconvenient, but it has been historically necessary for a long time. It also is not of significance to use that some centrists have refused to join the underground Party.

Political reasons have determined our stand:

(1) **THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE BOURGEOISIE**, in which the petty bourgeoisie and the farmers are conducting an ever sharper struggle against the big bourgeoisie. The two sections of the bourgeoisie are in bitter conflict over the treatment to be accorded the labor movement. The cleft makes it impossible to persecute the Communists with united force and with a solid bourgeois public opinion behind it, as has been done in the past.

(2) **THE GROWING SOLIDARITY OF THE WORKING CLASS**. The signs of this solidarity are: (a) The tremendous labor struggles; (b) The idea of a general strike in the minds of the workers; (c) The rapid development of the amalgamation movement; (d) The growing Labor Party movement; (e) Greater influence of the Communists in the Labor Unions; (f) Greater sympathy for the Communists and the WP in the labor movement, as for example, in the matter of defense and the Labor Party conference; (g) The common persecutions of both Communists and militant workers; (h) The WP functioning more and more as a Communist Party.

The economic foundation of the political situation rests upon: (a) The offensive of the capitalists; (b) The crisis among the farmers.

Politically, the resistance of the working masses, and the rebellion among the farmers manifested itself in the following important events: (1) The formation of the agricultural bloc in Congress; (2) The Daugherty injunction giving political aspects to the strike of a million workers; (3) The November 7th elections; (4) The formation of the LaFollette group; (5) The Labor Party conference in Cleveland; (6) The Railroad Workers Amalgamation Conference in Chicago; (7) The raid on the Party Convention and the reaction thereto; (8) During the war, centralization of state power took place to a degree unknown in American History, but this fact came into the consciousness of the workers only through the Daugherty injunction.

All of these facts and events were in the process of formation before the Party convention, but crystallized themselves definitely after the convention. Hence, just as we believe that in 1919 it was absolutely necessary for the Party to become an underground organization, we believe that today the time is ripe for the Open Party.

6. We trust that we will be able to carry out the reorganization of the Party without a crisis. It is possible that a few sectarian elements will leave the Party. But we are convinced that no organized faction will fight against the policy of the CEC and the CI, and that we will be able to lead the Party into the open without a split. For that reason, the CEC decided unanimously that within a short time we shall hold a Convention of the Party and place the question before it. The CEC will go to that convention with a clear and definite resolution on the Open Party and will demand for the CEC a mandate from the convention to declare the WP the Open Party, and at the same time, for the safety of this Party, to transform the Underground Party into an underground apparatus. Up to the convention, by means of systematic education of the membership, we wish to convince them of

†- These are the "three factions" alluded to earlier in this document. The "Convention Majority" refers to the so-called "Goose Caucus" — those inside the party (including members of the Central Caucus who had rejoined the organization in the first half of 1922) who favored retaining the "seat of party authority" with the underground movement; it was thus notable that these were now working for a Labor Party and for the "open party." The "Convention Minority" refers to the "Liquidators," who favored moving the "seat of party authority" to the open WPA; these were Anglophonic and American-oriented individuals and it was thus notable that they were now actively working for protection of the foreign-born, often their factional opponents, who stood the most to lose if the open movement was again repressed as in 1920. The "former opposition" refers to the Central Caucus faction, former members of the old CPA's language federations who split over tactics employed with regard to the Workers Party of America at the time of its formation; it was notable that this group was now actively working for the "open party."

the necessity of this policy.

7. The CEC will carry out the decisions of the CI not only out of discipline but because of full conviction of their correctness. All of our policies, since the Party convention, have been in the direction of open work. We wish to mention only a few facts: (a) Defense campaign; (b) LP [Labor Party] campaign; (c) Protection of foreign-born workers campaign; (d) Amalgamation campaign; (e) Communist program for WP; (f) Fraternal affiliation of the WP to the CI; (g) The RI [Red International of Trade Unions] has been made the industrial department of the Party; RI discipline has been declared Party discipline; (h) Organizational form of CP made to correspond to that of WP, by creating the same units in the Party as in the WP, and eliminating all other units; (i) Elimination of dualism in the two parties, by combining all directing committees of the Party; (j) The CEC took the question of the reorganization of the Party and of the Open Party to the Party Council and discussed it there on its merits, and obtained a nearly unanimous decision in support.

All of these steps were taken by the CEC before the decision of the CI reached us and were based on the political development of the country.

8. We believe it our duty to inform the CI that if opposition to the policies of the CEC and the CI has arisen in the past and should arise in the future, it is not due only to the foreign-born elements in the Party. We believe that it is necessary for us at this point to touch upon the question of the foreign-born in the Party. We agree with the CI that the foreign-born elements are good elements and ready to make great sacrifices. We believe that not only this fact gives them great importance, but rather the fact that the overwhelming majority of the workers in the basic industries in America are foreign-born workers. The foreign-born workers are the unskilled elements in all sections of the country. They are the most oppressed and most exploited workers. These most exploited elements of Europe are natural recruiting grounds for Communism. Very large portions of the organized workers also are foreign-born. For instance, the majority of the 400,000 United Mine Workers, the overwhelming majority of the unions of the needle trades, which comprise about 400,000 workers, are foreign-born.

It is of great importance to the Party to get into its ranks not only the mass of the American workers, but also the mass of the foreign-born workers as well. This is imperative so as to give no opportunity for another revolutionary party to be formed outside our ranks and consisting chiefly of the foreign-born. We wish to state that the foreign-born workers are just as good fighters as the American workers. We need only quote W.Z. Foster, an authority on the American Labor movement, who says: "When the historic struggle with the steel trust came, the foreign workers covered themselves with undying glory. They displayed the very highest type of labor union qualities."

9. Despite the importance of the foreign-born for our Party, we are firmly convince that the leadership of the movement in America must be in the hands of the American comrades. We are convinced of this for the reason that (a) only a CP controlled by American elements will bring about the amalgamation of a movement composed of American and foreign-born elements; (b) Only American leaders can eliminate the prejudices of the American-born workers; (c) Only American leadership can make the CP a mass movement and factor in the political life of the country, and can fight on equal terms against the conservative leaders of the bourgeoisie and of the trade unions, by their command of the language and by a knowledge of the conditions of this country.

For that reason, the CEC is making the greatest efforts to draw into the Party the best elements in the left wing of the trade union movement.

We wish to point out that, at the present time, our Party is no longer dominated by the foreign-language federations, but the federations are an integral part of the Party and are supporting it in every way. The composition of the CEC is not determined by the demands of the federations for control; and we hope that, in the future, the language federations will serve eventually as propaganda sections for the Party as a whole.

We are also combatting a European psychology that persists to a degree in our foreign-born comrades, which makes them look to Europe and their native country for inspiration. We are drawing them deeply into the trade union work and using them for binding the foreign-born workers closely to the Party.

10. The organization of the WP gave the Party

an opportunity to do open work as never before. The unification of the movement in America during the past few months and the imparting of a more and more Communist character to the WP have widened the field of activity and increased Communist influence in this country. We are convinced that the inauguration of an Open CP, with its obvious simplification and directness, will broaden and extend Communist activities manifold and make the Open Party a powerful factor in the labor movement and political life of the United States and the revolutionary proletarian movement of the world.

Fraternally yours,

Central Executive Committee of the CP of A

J. Miller,  
Executive Secretary.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.  
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