
Inviting Debs to Soviet Russia: Letter from Israel Amter in Moscow to the Presidium of the Comintern, March 9, 1923.

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 176, l. 7.

March 9, 1923.

To the Presidium of the Comintern:

Dear Comrades:

Eugene V. Debs has expressed a desire to visit Soviet Russia. The CEC of the American Party, believing that it would be a very good thing to have Debs see Soviet Russia with his own eyes, has at last persuaded him to make the trip.

When Debs came from prison, he was very angry with the Communists for their failure to do anything to obtain his release. Undoubtedly he was right in his contention, but the American Party not understanding proper tactics and incensed that he did not break away from a party that adopted as reactionary a program as it did at its New York Convention [May 8-14, 1920], did not feel inclined to speak in his behalf.

Nevertheless, when he left prison, he stated that he would not join either the Communists or the Socialists until he was fully acquainted with the situation. He was furnished with Communist literature and several comrades went to see him. But Debs was kept from close association by ill health and his brother, who is a yellow Socialist. The Socialist Party made the greatest efforts to win him over and finally succeeded. Debs declared he would stand by the SP.

Were Debs a clear-thinking socialist, he would not so easily have become the victim of the Socialist Party. For the attitude and actions of the SP of America are so reactionary that even a progressively minded

person would be repelled. But Debs is a sentimentalist and, being old, did not see through their trickery. It is probable that the persistent attacks of the SP on Soviet Russia and Debs' persistent love for the working class; but more especially the recent lining up of Hillquit and Schlesinger with the reactionary AF of L bureaucracy, have opened his eyes.

Debs has been interested in the famine relief work being conducted by our organization, the Friends of Soviet Russia, and has several times written letters in approval and support. His latest contribution was \$10 for a children's home named after him.

Undoubtedly Debs' honesty coupled with his undying love for the working class, and especially his repugnance at the brutal attacks of the Socialist press on Soviet Russia have made him at last desire to see Soviet Russia with his own eyes and judge for himself.

The CEC of the American party believes that an invitation from the Russian Railway Union and the All-Russian Trade Unions would be the most appropriate. Debs being an old railroad man would be moved by old reminiscences. However, the Soviet Government may be inclined to invite him itself. We request the Presidium, therefore, to have the Soviet Government take up the matter as soon as possible. We ask that the invitation be cabled, and that copy of the cable be sent to the Friends of Soviet Russia, 201 West 13th St., New York.

Trusting that the matter will be settled without delay, I am

Fraternally,

I. Amter.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.