
Circular to All Branches of the Russian Federation of the Communist Party of America from Oscar Tyverovsky, Secretary, circa September 15, 1919. †

Russian document and translation in the DoJ/BoI Investigative Files,
NARA collection M-1085, reel 938, file 202600-1172.

To All Branches Russian Federation
Communist Party of America.

Dear Comrades!

Two conventions met in Chicago during the month of September [1919]:

1. The Convention of the Communist Party.
2. The Convention of the American Socialist Party.

The first convention was attended by all true followers of the Bolsheviks constituting the Left Wing of the American Socialist Party, who finally decided to break with the reactionary American Socialist Party.

The second convention was composed of the followers of Scheidemann — Hillquit, Stedman, Germer & Co. — and of the Centrist elements who expected to seize the party machinery.‡ Yet, the first day [Aug. 30, 1919], when it became evident that the seizure of the party was a useless loss of energy, and when the Scheidemann clique called upon the police in order to pacify the Centrists; the latter, aroused by *such peculiar action*, understood that the time came for them to establish a party of their own.

Disregarding the fact that the Convention of the Communist Party agreed to accept those delegates who would be willing to submit to the requirements governing the delegates of the Communist Convention, i.e., to pass the Mandate Commission, those elements, reciting revolutionary phrases, yet being afraid to unite for revolutionary action, decided to organize their own party, the Communist Labor Party.

That party is a party of leaders without a following [*massy*].

Even before the termination of the Convention, those leaders departed to visit various cities with the purpose of gathering followers.

Their call was responded to only by single individuals, and such organization that were expelled from the Bolshevik organization because of their Menshevik tactics and disorganizing activities.

Among those who answered the call there also were such branches that were excluded by the 5th Convention of the Russian Communist Federation [Detroit: Aug. 20-28, 1919].

These so-called Communists are dispatching their agents to all branches of the Federation, endeavoring to sow discord and disturbance within their own

†- A March 5, 1920 letter in the same file from New York Division Superintendent George F. Lamb to J. Edgar Hoover in Washington indicates that this document was seized as part of the mass raids conducted during the night of Jan. 1/2, 1920. The 4 page handwritten Russian original is undated, but content of the document clearly deals with the earliest phase of factional maneuvering between the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party, matters of concern of September 1919.

‡- “Centrists” is used here as an epithet referring to those who would shortly form the Communist Labor Party of America, not to the actual Centrist Marxist orientation which dominated the SPA in this period. Tyverovsky once again gives place of honor to the bogeyman of the Left Wing Section, Morris Hillquit. In reality Hillquit was ill and recuperating from tuberculosis in upstate New York during the summer of 1919 and he was informed of the Chicago events by Adolph Germer *post facto*. Nor did Seymour Stedman have much of anything to do with the actual 1919 split. A more accurate polemical reduction of the 1919 convention leadership of the SP Regulars would have warned of the spectre of “Germer, Gerber, Oneal & Co.”

ranks.

Instead of forming openly a platform of the communist Labor Party that frankly would show its political physiognomy, they hid under the cover of Soviet Representation [the Martens Bureau] and call upon the masses to join their newly organized [Russian] Federation without stating the party which they actually represent.

They would not mention the fact that the communist Labor Party has not yet definitely severed its relations with the Socialist Party and is still using its name in relationship with the elections of representatives into the executive and legislative offices of the American government, accepting thereby the responsibility for all laws promulgated against the workingmen. They attach a great importance to parliamentarism, thereby leading the American proletariat into delusion.

These so-called communists purposely omit stating the fact that according to their program their representatives in parliament have the right of introducing reforms.

Our party, the party of the revolutionary proletariat, the Communist Party of America, bearing in mind the revolutionary inclination of the masses and the movement toward mass strikes, is at the present time boycotting all elections for all government offices.

We come out frankly and summon the working class to action, because only through revolutionary struggle of the working class shall we be able to deliver revolutionary Russia from the clutches of the imperi-

alists, against whom she raised the torch of Social Revolution and threw down the challenge to the bourgeoisie of the entire world.

Many other differences, theoretical as well as tactical, could still be pointed out, but for that purpose we have our revolutionary press.

These differences are passed on in silence by these so-called communists. Their attempt is to reduce our principle differences to the question of controlling the Soviet Representative.†

This question was discussed in detail at the 5th Regular Convention of our Federation. The question of control is at present being discussed by the Bolshevik Soviet Government.‡ “They” also know this as well as you comrades do, yet in spite of it they spread lying rumors that the Russian Federation were acting against the Soviet Representative here in America.

They utilize their backbiting, lying paper, *Pravda*, through which they slander the Russian Federation.

Comrades!

During this revolutionary moment while the Communist Party of America, the offspring of the 3rd International of Moscow, needs strength for the work among the American proletariat, we must stand fast at our post, not allowing the evil-doers to disrupt our ranks.

With fraternal greetings,

Secretary of the Federation,
O. Tyverovsky.

†- The CPA was extremely antagonistic to Ludwig Martens and his Russian Soviet Government Bureau, including as it did in a key position Santeri Nuorteva (a friend of the loathed Morris Hillquit) and formally engaging Hillquit himself on March 18, 1919 as the head of the legal department of the RSGB. The CPA sought to bring the RSGB under party discipline and control, and would have favored the recall of Martens and the removal of such “Centrists” as Nuorteva and Hillquit. The Communist Labor Party, on the other hand, enjoyed a close relationship with Martens and his bureau, with CLP member and CLP Russian language press editor Gregory Weinstein the office manager of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau since April 7, 1919. This does not mean that the CPA did not have ties of its own to the Martens Bureau as the acting head of the RSGB Legal Department, owing to Hillquit’s incapacitation due to illness, was Isaac Hourwich — father of CPA leader Nicholas Hourwich [Nikolai Gurvich].

‡- Even before the 7 suspended Federations of the Socialist Party congealed into the Communist Party of America, they dispatched a representative, the Bronx-dwelling Latvian Kristap Beika [“John A. Anderson”], to Moscow to advance the interests of the group.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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