
Report of the International Delegate to the Conference of the CP of A [delivered circa May 8, 1922]

by John J. Ballam

Published in *The Communist* [New York: Central Caucus-CPA Opposition],
v. 1, no. 11 (June 1922), pp. 6-8. Specimen in the Harvard University collection.

I propose to give you a report which shall contain a mere statement of facts, reserving the right to express my opinion as to what the Party should do and participate in the discussion.

In this building we launched the fight for recognition and we said we would never yield until the 4th Congress. The fight has been made. We have lost.

On my arrival in Moscow on the 12th of March [1922], the first person I saw was Carr [Ludwig Katterfeld]. I had sent from London a cablegram asking them to postpone consideration of the American question until arrival of the American delegate from CP of A, Bolshevik faction, repeating the same telegram from Berlin. I knew when I received connections in Berlin that I would be received in Russia as the delegate from our Party.

Carr [Katterfeld] was there to meet me in the Lux [Hotel in Moscow]. I made an appointment with him. I found out in Riga that he was an officer of the Presidium [of the Comintern] and as such I recognized him. I told him I had two requests to make through him as a member of the Presidium: one to use the cables and to correspond with my party without going through his hands; second, to get my documents, which had been delivered to the courier in Berlin for transmission to Moscow. He said, "Nothing of an official nature can be sent to the American Parties unless it goes through my hands." I told him I expected that reply. The documents containing reports of the emergency convention [Central Caucus-Opposition: New York: Jan. 7-12, 1922], etc., were never presented during the hearing of the American ques-

tion. I do not believe they were held by the CI. They were in the hands of the courier who failed to deliver them. It was promised that these documents would be made a part of the record as soon as they were received.

I was informed by Carr [Katterfeld] that the EC had appointed a commission of 3, consisting of Comrades [Heinrich] Brandler, [Mátyás] Rákosi, and [Otto] Kuusinen. Carr [Katterfeld] also informed me that same afternoon that the case would be disposed of very quickly and that would settle the American question.

The next morning Carr [Katterfeld] informed me that he took up with Marshall [Max Bedacht] the matter of allowing me to freely communicate with my party, and decided the request would be granted.

That same morning he informed me that there would be a meeting of the American Commission that night and I told him that I was not prepared to go to the meeting as I had not received my documents.

The first meeting of the American Commission was held on March 15 [1922], Rákosi saying that he wanted a meeting whether the papers were found or not, and I had to agree to that. I reported the situation in the United States up to the time of the holding of our Emergency Convention and its decisions, all of which were contained in the documents which had not yet been delivered to me. Kuusinen agreed that was fair. It was my impression that the American Commission would not proceed further until after these papers were presented.

I sent many letters to the American party, but they did not reach you.

The next day I was called up and told to be

present in half an hour at a full meeting of the EC to discuss the American Question. I protested because the American Commission had not finished its hearings, or received the documents of the Emergency Convention.

The American Commission had in its last meeting considered a document drawn up by Carr [Katterfeld] and this is what the EC adopted at its first meeting.

This formed the basis of the report of the American Commission.

In reply to this, I drew up certain proposals for unification of the two factions. No other business came before the EC at this session but the American Questions, but the session did not last very long. Brandler, chairman of the American Commission, reported the results of its hearings and after quoting the previous decisions of the Executive Committee stating that the American situation was no different from their previous knowledge, especially with reference to the LPP [Workers Party of America], and that Carr's [Katterfeld's] reports were practically correct, and so presented the document which has been received here as the decisions of the EC.

I might say that the American Commission, at its hearing prior to the meeting of the EC, asked me if I had any proposals to make to settle the American Question, at which time I stated that if any proposals were made to settle it, they should come from Carr [Katterfeld]; whereupon Carr [Katterfeld] presented the document quoted.

In answer to these I formulated certain counter-proposals. These proposals were as follows:

Proposals for the Unification of the Two Factions of the Communist Party of America.

1— That a convention of the Communist Party of America shall be held in which both factions shall participate.

2— This convention shall be called and supervised by a committee to be composed of Moore [Ballam], Marshall [Bedacht], and a third member to be designated by the EC of the CI. The representative of the EC of the CI to have full power and the deciding vote to be chairman of the convention and to have power to break all deadlocks that may occur therein.

3— If the above provisions are granted the claim for recognition of the faction represented by Moore [Ballam] is forthwith waived.

4— the faction represented by Moore [Ballam] will pledge themselves in advance of the convention to abide

by all the decisions of the convention and the instructions of the EC of the CI.

5— The Executive Committee to be elected at the convention to have the power and shall be instructed to call a congress of the legal party which shall be reconstituted according to the decisions of the convention.

6— The faction represented by Moore [Ballam] shall, immediately following the convention, join the legal party and participate in its reconstruction.

7— The faction represented by Moore [Ballam] shall, upon the holding of the convention, be disbanded, and all its apparatus, organizational machinery, books, documents, funds, etc., shall be turned over to the representative of the EC of the CI who shall be chairman of the convention.

8— The faction represented by Moore [Ballam] shall, upon receiving instructions from the EC of the CI, immediately cease publishing *The Communist* and shall forthwith waive its claim to be the Communist Party of America.

9— Moore [Ballam] and Marshall [Bedacht], together with the representative of the EC of the CI, shall proceed at once to the United States and shall report simultaneously to both factions of the Communist Party of America, and shall pledge themselves to faithfully carry out these instructions.

Fraternally submitted,

John Moore [John Ballam].

These proposals were presented to the EC, since they were not reported by the chairman of the American Commission [Brandler]. Zinoviev declared that since the question of the organization of the legal party was eliminated, the theoretical differences between the two factions were wiped out and that therefore the EC should adopt the report of the American Commission. (During the hearings of the American Commission I had never agreed that a legal party should have been organized in the US.) I then took the floor and I read the following protest:

Protest of Comrade John Moore [John Ballam] to the EC of the CI.

Moscow, March 18th, 1922.

To the EC of the CI.

Comrades:

The undersigned has been sent to the Comintern to represent 5,000 comrades in America, whose fidelity to the principles of the Communist International has never been questioned, and whose devotion to the Proletarian Revolution in Russia and throughout the world is beyond doubt.

These comrades in America sent me to the EC of the

CI expecting to obtain at least a complete and thorough hearing and investigation of the causes and incidents leading up to the present deplorable situation in the American Communist movement.

At the instigation of Comrades Carr [Katterfeld] and Marshall [Bedacht] the proceedings of the commission appointed by the EC to report upon the American situation were hurried and the investigation far from satisfactory. There was no stenographer present and no adequate interpreter. From my observation the Commission kept no records and called no witnesses. I had no opportunity to present documents which contained important information, although these documents are in the possession of the Comintern.

Comrade Carr [Katterfeld] informed me upon the first hour of my arrival that my case would be quickly settled and that he had already drawn up a letter that I must sign. At the very first hearing conducted by the Commission, Comrade Marshall [Bedacht] informed the Commission that he had his passports vised and therefore wanted the proceedings to be hurried as he wanted to return to the United States with the decision of the Comintern in his pocket.

I must therefore most emphatically protest against the manner in which the American case was conducted, and assert that no adequate solution of the difficulty can be achieved in this haphazard manner. If the EC of the CI wishes to support Comrade Carr [Katterfeld] and his friends in the face of a growing and determined opposition, not only among the comrades who have given me their mandate to represent them, but also among the faction directly represented by Carr [Katterfeld] and Marshall [Bedacht], the consequences will rest squarely upon the EC.

I have been and am now ready to subscribe to any compromise which will liquidate the factional struggle in the American Party, and have offered such a compromise in writing, but the EC of the Comintern cannot expect the comrades whom I represent to again place themselves under the heel of the bureaucrats who have so unceremoniously expelled them. We demand from the Comintern adequate guarantees that our membership rights will not be violated and cannot yield, under the circumstances, unless such guarantees are provided.

We want to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Comintern and for its principles and policies. We are loyal soldiers in the proletarian revolution but we firmly believe that the action that we are forced to take is in the interests of the movement in America and therefore in the best interests of the world proletariat.

We implore the EC of the CI to thoroughly investigate the American party and all the events leading up to the present situation. If we can get such an investigation we feel sure that the Comintern itself will discover that the entire American question has been misrepresented and the Comintern will find a way to settle these difficulties satisfactorily to the needs of the American movement and to all parties concerned.

Fraternally submitted,

John Moore [John Ballam].

I then stated to the EC since they had appointed

a commission to investigate and report upon the American Question, I did not propose to enter into a discussion of the many points involved at this time, since I did not consider that the American Commission had made the necessary investigation or given the EC an adequate report. Zinoviev has already said that the report should be adopted and this means that the report will be adopted unanimously by the EC no matter what facts would be presented.

I analyzed the LPP [WPA], its membership, its program, and the manner in which it was organized, declaring it to be a Centrist sect without any revolutionary proletarian elements and entirely outside of the control of the No. 1 [CPA]. I pleaded with the EC not to adopt the report of the American Commission but instead to send a commission to the US to investigate and find some adequate means of solving the difficulty; that if they could do nothing more than take the proposed action I would conceive it to be my duty to return to the US and fight the LPP [WPA] as a menace to the American labor movement.

[Boris] Souvarine then took the floor and said he agreed with me. There has been no adequate investigation and does not see where there is any hurry. There have been several splits in the last two years and there must be something the matter and said I was right in asking for a more thorough investigation. The Commission was enlarged. I nominated Souvarine and Carr [Katterfeld] nominated [Boris] Reinstein, so the Commission consisted of Kuusinen, Rákosi, Brandler, Souvarine, and Reinstein.

Zinoviev then said that the EC should adopt the report of the American Commission in principle, which meant that the question of the legal party and the question of recognition was settled. The American Question was not considered in any future session of the EC, the American Commission having been given full power to reach a settlement. They decided to wait until my papers came; but they were not found and I left. They waited for the papers for 4 or 5 days and decided to go on without them.

A point was reached in the hearings before the American Commission in which the Commission agreed to appoint a commission to come to the US. The trouble with commissions has been that they had no definite mandate so I drew up the following proposals and submitted them:

Moscow, March 23, 1922.

To the American Commission:

Comrades:

In order to reunite the divided factions of the Communist Party of America with the least possible delay and to avoid further splits and misunderstandings, I propose the following:

(1) That a commission of 3 be appointed, the chairman to be a comrade selected by the EC of the CI and agreed upon by the American delegation. (I propose the nomination of Comrade [Mikhail] Borodin.)

(2) This commission of 3 to attend all meetings of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party with voice but no vote.

(3) This commission to have access to all books, records, files, and accounts of the Communist Party of America.

(4) The commission to receive connections with all districts, branches, and local units of the Communist Party of America.

(5) The commission to investigate the affairs of the Communist Party of America and to make a complete report to the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

(6) A convention of the Party to be called within 30 days of the unity of the two factions and to be held within 30 days of the issuance of the call.

(7) This commission to be financed directly by the Comintern.

Fraternally submitted,

John Moore [John Ballam].

Carr [Katterfeld] objected on the ground that the commission would supercede the CEC of the party. Rákosi then wanted to know Moore's [Ballam's] stand and the stand of his party on the question of legal political party. And I told him what the stand was very openly. Then he said there was no need of a commission, because I did not mean reconstruction but destruction. Brandler said it was not in his mind to reconstitute the LPP [WPA]. That was settled by the EC at its last session when they adopted the report in principle and by all their previous decisions. Brandler then withdrew his proposition from the whole commission and the question went back to the same place it was before. In the meantime I talked with Zinoviev and others about the American question. There is not a person in Moscow who formerly belonged to our faction that supports our position.† Not one of the representatives of the Communist parties of other

countries in Moscow that supports our position. Our only friend was the old man Yavki [Sen Katayama] and even he was opposed to our position on the LPP [WPA].

The manner in which the CI handles different situations seems to be as follows: When a question does not interfere with policy as laid down by the Third [International], the CI does not care. They care nothing for majorities. They will support a minority who will carry out their policies against a majority that is opposed to them. They consider the greatest crime against the International is splitting. They say, "You represent 5,000 comrades in America, whose comrades are they? Dobin's [Charles Dirba's], Moore's [Ballam's], and Henry's [George Ashkenuzi's]? Or are they Lenin's, Trotsky's, and Bukharin's? You must obey the discipline first.

I told them the boys were not ready to unite with Centrists. They answered, "You do not want to support Centrists in the US? You are afraid of them in America, where they are not dangerous? We are not afraid of them in Europe where they are dangerous."

Brandler said he considered all these documents were too mild. He believes that these 5,000 comrades were Communists and should not be spoken to in mild words. Brandler said that he was not optimistic about the success of the LPP; nevertheless the CI would support it with all its power.

Just a word as to the situation in Moscow during the time that the American question was being considered. The conference of the 3 Internationals [Berlin: April 2-5, 1922] was about to be held. Bukharin, [Klara] Zetkin, and [Louis-Oscar] Frossard were in Germany. They were preparing for the Genoa Conference [April 10-May 19, 1922] and many of the big fellows were leaving. The 11th Congress of the RKP [March 27-April 2, 1922] was in session in Moscow with the Workers Opposition as the main question, which created an unfavorable sentiment toward any opposition.

I claimed that Carr [Katterfeld] did not represent his faction. Carr [Katterfeld] was recalled by the CEC and Marshall [Bedacht] instructed to take his place. Carr [Katterfeld] notified Marshall [Bedacht] of the decision, but Marshall [Bedacht] ignored it and

†- This group would have included most predominantly Nicholas Hourwich, Oscar Tyverovsky, and Alexander Stoklitsky.

returned to the States.

I wasn't to say that the situation in Moscow has become more favorable for us providing we carry out the mandate of the EC. They are sending their representative to this country [Genrik Valetski]. He carries a mandate directly from the EC and has plenipotentiary powers. I advise you to give him all the facts. I think this gives you a complete report.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2007. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.