
**Letter to the Central Executive Committee
of the United Communist Party in New York
from Max Bedacht [“James A. Marshall”]
Representative of the UCP to ECCI in Moscow,
May 4, 1921.**

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May 4, 1921.

Dear Friends:

Today, two weeks after the arrival of the TU people [American delegates to the RILU World Congress], we have at last received the papers they brought with them. They show me that you have not received anything from me as yet. I must protest against your insinuation that I duplicate all our other representatives by not sending regular reports. Since my leaving home, not a week has passed in which I did not send one or more letters. Only the first 11 days may be excepted, for the reason of physical impossibility to send mail from the steamer.

As to your complaint about not receiving Rosta Review and other periodical literature, I may repeat here what I have already written in a previous report. You have up to now not supplied the necessary addresses to the main office [Comintern]. The 3 or 4 addresses available are for mail, telegrams, etc., and should not be spoiled by being overworked. In order to get an adequate supply of all material issued, you must get at least from a dozen to 20 addresses, which can be distributed to the different departments of the main office [Comintern] to send their publications and reports. While in Stockholm, I looked over the addresses in possession of the agency there and found a great number of individuals' addresses to whom publications are sent, but I want to say that these people are not connected with our company [party]. I could not supply them with any new addresses, because firstly I was given only 3, and secondly, those 3 were not



intended for printed matter. One was for letters, one for telegrams, and one for packages. Please get as many addresses as you can and remember that any address can be utilized for sending printed matter without risk. Furthermore, I have supplied the Stockholm agency with our code, and was promised that they would communicate with you about this matter.

Latimer [European contact of the CLP and UCP] has established an agency in Ch. [Christiana, Norway?], in the name of the main office [Comintern]. This agency is the distributing center of goods for all the world. However, he cannot use his own discretion in the selection of goods sent. All shipments to him are already designated to him for some point or

other. I saw Latimer here and found out that he did send somebody to the States, but not as a permanent agent but only to establish a regular trade route.

I will supply you in the near future with addresses of branch offices [national Communist Parties] everywhere as per request. By the way, all of your complaints about inefficiency are the outgrowth of an inherent disease in the management of all the affairs here. And even if you send a representative who will walk on his head and talk with his feet, you will not overcome it. Former representatives should have informed us about this. *CI* magazine in English [*The Communist International*] could not be received by you, because it was not issued. It is true that questionable papers get service from here, but it is the policy to supply everybody with material. We do not get it, because they have NO ADDRESSES. I repeat: send from a dozen to 20, at least. Outside of the periodicals, nothing has been issued the last few months, except in reference to the Chairman's [Zinoviev's] visit to Germany last fall.

When I arrived here, I found that Morris Z. [Zucker] and Ed Fisher [Leonid Belsky] were in bad standing here. † I immediately inquired as to the what and wherefore, and what I could do for them. Nobody, however, paid any attention to me, and both matters were disposed of without my taking part in it. The matter of Fisher [Belsky] I cannot now report, but is exceedingly interesting. I was informed that Morris Z. [Zucker], after the settlement of his affairs, returned "home" [to the United States] and is now slandering this concern [Soviet Russia] there.

In regards to your instructions to our TU [RILU] people about reporting to the Board of Directors [ECCI], I must inform you that you labor under some misapprehension as to the ways in which this body carries on its business. Again, I must complain that former representatives were either blind or did not

think us worthy of being fully informed about everything. These TU [RILU] people were invited to the meeting of the Board of Directors [ECCI], but only one was given the floor, and this one was of the selection of the B of D [ECCI] and not ours. He spoke about his pet sideshow, not mentioning one word about our main business. ‡ All questions of power and control will have to wait for settlement until your representative [Bedacht] will cease to be persona non grata. At present, it is considered a crime to only mention America in the presence of any of the responsible heads of the concern [Comintern]. This may give you an idea of the "pleasant" situation in which I find myself. Had I, together with all other people connected with our American Branch Office [party] not considered it of the utmost importance to await developments here, especially in view of Nichol's [Hourwich's] activities, I would have returned in March already.

I see that you are still preparing reports about our disagreements [factionally with the CPA] in the States. I hope that latest developments in the question of amalgamation will put a stop to this. I have, however, as I already reported to you, drafted a full report, including all material about negotiations and giving account of our various business activities, and have submitted copies of this report to the individual members of the Board of Directors [ECCI]. I have also submitted the report about agricultural machinery, together with additional remarks drafted by me.

I found out quite a while ago that the Michigan people [the Proletarian Party of America] tried to establish business relations [affiliate] with the main office here [Comintern]. In order to achieve this end, they slighted both existing concerns there [UCP and CPA], claiming to be the real thing. The question of inviting representatives to the general stockholders' meeting to be held here [World Congress of the CI] was taken up

†- Both New York Left Wing Section veteran Morris Zucker and key Chicago Ruthenberg lieutenant Leonid Belsky ran afoul of the Soviet secret police. Zucker went to Soviet Russia in Nov. 1920 as seaman, and upon arrival claimed to have lost his passport and money. He was rrested after 3 weeks by Cheka and held in prison in Moscow until about April 1, 1921, at which point he was released and ordered to leave country immediately. Belsky, on the other hand, was reportedly expelled from the RSDRP as a suspected spy back in 1911. He wound up in America, was active in the Russian Federation, and rose to fill the important post of Chicago District Organizer of the old CPA in 1920. Belsky was a bitter foe of Nicholas Hourwich and the antagonism between Chicago and New York factions in the Russian Federation is an underappreciated contributing factor to the April 1920 split. Along with Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg and I.E. Ferguson, Belsky was one of the 3 key leaders of the CPA minority faction that split with the old CPA and soon united with the Communist Labor Party to form the UCP in May 1920. At some point thereafter, Belsky returned to Russia, where he was soon arrested by the Cheka.

‡- Apparently a reference to the not-yet-Communist William Z. Foster discussing his Trade Union Educational League.

by a sub-committee of the Board of Directors [ECCI] in my presence. It was decided there that such recognition was impossible and that the establishment of close business relations between the Michigan concern [PPA] and the main office here [CI] would only be possible by amalgamating with American branch office [a unified CPA]. Such amalgamation would not mean a repetition of endless negotiations but merely unconditional surrender.

I will write to Reval [Finland] to straighten out matters there. In regards to Jewish trade material [literature], the necessary steps have been taken.

Now, as to the case of Brown [=???]: as it seems, he holds his position as traveling salesman, without being under bond. Should he report in person at the date mentioned in your letter, he will face three possibilities: first, that he will lose his job, which allows him to roam about in the world, and be put into some sticky office; second, that the discrepancy about his bond, will be ordered repaired; and, third, that your hopes will come true that he will keep his position without further incumbrance.†

The first possibility, I should judge, is by no means desirable to you and certainly not to him. You might think that this possibility is so remote that he may take the chance, but I answer that such remote possibilities have become realities in so many instances that it is almost a crime to take another chance, providing that you really desire to keep him out of a steady indoor job. The second possibility does not exclude the first or the third, but puts the decision only further off. In case of such decision being unfavorable, the first possibility would become reality, or a fourth one would come into play, viz. the loss of the new bond, providing he would not be lucky enough to strike the third possibility. To see only this third chance, and so close to the eyes to the rest of them, is too risky. I wish you would consider the matter in this light, al-

though I am sure that Brown [=???] appreciates your motives and is rather in favor of your plans as to future business activities. Please, inquire carefully into the chances and also about the date, so your decision, which of course will be binding on Brown [=???], will be for the best interest of our concern [party].

Again I want to point out to you the necessity of furnishing all people connected with our concern [party] who travel this way letters of recommendation, stating the exact time of their connection with our establishment [date of party membership], including the time of connection with our predecessors [former organizational history], and stating the capacity in which they were active. This record must be traced back as far as possible — if possible and necessary, even for 25 years.‡ Please, notify the main office [ECCI headquarters] officially at once that they should not recognize anybody, even though their affiliation without our concern [party] may be vouched for by 2 or more people known to them. In any case, where letter of recommendation could not be furnished on account of sudden departure, application should be made before departure with request to send the letter of recommendation directly to the main office [ECCI headquarters] here, through your representative. Also notify all your departments of such decision.

Have received cablegrams today, notifying me of the fact that an agreement for amalgamation has been reached. Answer to these cablegrams will be given by wire, so that I need not go into details here. In case this letter reaches you in time, I want to again mention, as I did in my last report to you, the necessity of eliminating Mr. Nicol [Nicholas Hourwich] from the list of officials of our branch office [delegation or appointment to Moscow on behalf of the American party]. If you find yourself powerful enough to do that, make a thorough job of it. Not only should this gentleman not be the representative of the American branch

†- The meaning of this passage eludes the editor. “Brown” was a common pseudonym, having been used by a member of the old CPA’s CEC in 1920 (still unattributed, possibly John Ballam). It was also a name used by Bedacht himself (“John Brown”) and by the CI Rep to Great Britain in 1921, Mikhail Borodin. It was later used by the CI’s 1927 Rep to the United States, the German Ewart. None of these seem to be satisfactory matches for the “Brown” referred to here. The “bizspeak” seems to relate to an American, or an international Communist favorable to the UCP, who was working as a carrier for the Comintern in danger of being demoted to an office job in the apparatus for some transgression.

‡- The date of one’s acceptance into the ranks of party membership, known in Russian as *stazh*, and the history of one’s previous political activity was extremely important information to the Soviet security apparatus. Past activity was believed to be one of the best indicators of future behavior. In a milieu penetrated by undercover operatives and secret informants, the establishment of trust was essential for the assignment of sensitive information or tasks to take place.

to the board of directors [ECCI], but he should not even be given a proxy to the general stockholders' meeting [CI World Congress] here.

Yours, as ever,

James [Max Bedacht].

Mr. Duffy [Alfred Wagenknecht] — personal:

I am in state of mind which would prove very unhealthy to you if you would be within reach. Why, in the name of common sense, do you not notify Mr. James [Mrs. Bedacht], whenever you are preparing mail for me, so she can enclose a letter. During the whole period of my absence I have not had a line from home. And you in your letters do not find it necessary to even mention the state of affairs at home. This is unbearable. You had better prepare now for the championship fight you will have on hand when I get back. Otherwise, everything is OK, except for the fact that the honor conferred upon me turned out to be quite a tedious and disagreeable job.†

Yours,

James.

†- This postscript from an unhappy husband is actually confirmation that “Paul Holt,” the Executive Secretary of the United Communist Party, was none other than Alfred Wagenknecht. UCP Pittsburgh Sub-District Organizer and Bureau of Investigation spy “Ryan” reported shortly after the May 1921 Joint Unity Convention held near Woodstock, New York, that “Holt” was Ludwig Katterfeld, a.k.a. “Elk.” Then again, “Ryan” also reported in his previous convention report that “Alden” was Ludwig Katterfeld — a physical impossibility since both “Holt” and “Alden” had served together on a 3 person UCP Unity Committee. BoI informer “Ryan” was probably confused by the fact that Katterfeld delivered the official report of the UCP to the gathering instead of Wagenknecht — typically a task of an organization’s Executive Secretary. The story of why Katterfeld delivered this report instead of Wagenknecht remains unknown. Wagenknecht was additionally not elected to the CEC of the unified CPA by this convention and his party career — which continued for the rest of his life — never again recovered its previous status. The fact that Bedacht wants to punch Wagenknecht (“Duffy”) in the nose for his thoughtlessness rather than Katterfeld (“Elk”/“Carr”) seems a solid indicator that Wagenknecht was “Holt” and Katterfeld was “Alden.”

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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