



LEGATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

INDEX BUREAU  
MAY  
22  
1926

Riga, Latvia,  
May 7, 1926.

*[Handwritten initials]*

~~STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.~~

DIVISION OF  
EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS.  
MAY 24 1926  
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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UNDER SECRETARY,  
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JUN 18 1926  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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INDEX BUREAU  
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No. 3748

The Honorable,  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to forward herewith a confidential report (IS/1), to which is attached a copy of a letter addressed to the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and the Central Soviet of the Red International of Trade Unions concerning work among negroes in the United States.

JUN 17 1925

CONFIDENTIAL FILE


-2-

The letter requested (1) a review of the decision of the Fifth Congress of the Communist International on the negro question; (2) an allotment of a special sum, aside from the regular assignment to the American Communist Party, for work among the negroes, and (3) the appointment of a special representative of the Red International of Trade Unions for the direction of the trade union movement among the negroes.

The Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International considered the letter on February 14. It was decided that a review of the decision of the Fifth Congress would be undesirable. The question of allotting special funds for work among the negroes was referred to the International Control Commission and the latter, on March 12, decided that an independent allotment for this purpose was not feasible at the present time. The Presidium considered that the appointment of a special representative of the Red International of Trade Unions to direct the negro trade union movement in America would be desirable and decided to inform the latter's Executive Bureau to that effect.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

  
J.C. WHITE,  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Enclosure:

- 1/ Materials on the Problem of the Negro Movement in North America. (With attachment.)

Enclosure No. / to despatch No.

5713

MATERIALS ON THE PROBLEM OF THE NEGRO  
MOVEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA.

Hereto is attached a communication of the League of Labor Union Propaganda (a Communist trade union organization of the United States of America) to the presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International with a copy to the Central Soviet of the Profintern (Red Trade Union International).

This letter is among the current materials of the Section of International Connections of the Communist Executive Committee, whence it was received.

This letter was sent by the League of Trade Union Propaganda for introduction of the question it touches upon at the extended plenary session of the Communist International Executive Committee.

The chief secretary of the League of Trade Union Propaganda, William Foster, now in Moscow, received from the League the instruction in every way to support the request of the League at the Communist International Executive Committee and at the Profintern.

The presidium of the Communist International Executive Committee considered this letter on February 14th, and the motion of the reporter Brown to hand the matter for detailed consideration on its merits to the committee of the plenary session

-2-

on the check-up of the decisions of the fifth world congress of the Communist International was rejected.

The presidium adopted the following resolution, introduced by Bukharin:

1. Review of the decision of the fifth congress of the Communist International is to be considered undesirable in view of the absence of facts changing the circumstances in the presence of which the decision of the congress was taken.
2. The question of allotting a special sum from the budget of the American Communist Party for the needs of the Negro movement in North America is to be passed on for action to the International Control Commission.
3. The proposal for the appointment of a representative of the Profintern for supervision and management of the Negro movement is to be regarded as very desirable, of which the Executive Council of the Profintern is to be informed.

As may be seen from the contents of the attached letter the fifth world congress of the Communist International in its resolution on the current work of the Communist International Executive Committee in America found the allotment of special sums for the support of the Negro

- 3-

movement, as was made by the Communist International Executive Committee in 1923 and 1924 to be expedient, and directed that the expenditures on the propaganda of the Negro movement be entered into the general disbursements of the Communist Party of North America.

The International Control Commission on March 12th a.o. took the following action on the question of the allotment of special sums for financing the negro movement:

The allotment of special sums for subsidizing the Negro movement, in view of the exhaustion of all the free funds at the disposal of the Communist International Executive Committee, the commission finds to be at the given moment unfeasible. In the current year the disbursement for this purpose, if circumstances require this, of a part of the supplementary budget of the American Communist Party for 1926 is possible.

This action was approved by the presidium of the Communist International Executive Committee on March 23rd and was communicated to the Central Committee of the American Communist Party.

There was no special consideration of the Negro question by the Communist International Executive Committee.

Moscow, March 30, 1926.

Enclosure: Letter of the League of Trade Union Propaganda in 9 sheets.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

To the Presidium of the Executive Com-  
mittee of the Communist International.

Copy to the Central  
Soviet of the Profintern.

Dear Comrades!

On the basis of the resolution of the  
League of Trade Union Propaganda of January 15th,  
1926, and the Central Committee of the Communist  
Party of North America of January 19th, 1926,  
we bring to your knowledge the request of both  
organizations for the review of the decisions  
of the fifth world congress of the Communist  
International on the Negro question (annex  
to resolution 6, remark II.).

The decision of the congress mentioned  
on the stoppage of the financial support of  
the Negro movement generally and of the trade  
union movement in particular as an independent  
factor, coupled with the imposition, instead of  
this support, upon the League of Trade Union  
Propaganda of the obligation by agitation means  
to spread the idea of the attraction of the  
Negroes into the trade union movement, has created  
an unacceptable situation in view of the simultaneous  
coexistence of two mutually competitive facts:

-2-

1. The resolution of the Negro congress of 1925 on the independent organization of Negro workmen;
2. The directive of the Communist International Executive Committee and the Profintern, on the attraction of Negroes into the general American labor union movement with equal rights with the whites.

Thanks to the thus created dualism with respect to the Negroes - on the one hand there are being established and developed purely Negro trade unions, and on the other hand the League of Trade Union Propaganda and the leading organization of the left wing of the trade union movement are exhausting their strength only on struggle with the race prejudices of the whites, which are being overcome exceedingly slowly and with the greatest difficulty. Efforts to concord and reconcile these two lines were made at the session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of North America, and its majority found the following platform, which would reconcile both tendencies, to be desirable. This point of view of the session of the Central Committee was made the basis of the resolution adopted by the session of the Central Committee on the Negro question:

-3-

The resolution of the Negro labor congress on the creation of independent organizations of Negro workingmen must be regarded as a necessary condition for all branches of toil in which the existing white trade unions have not hitherto admitted Negro workingmen as members.

On the other hand, the Central Committee does not deem it possible to hinder the effort of the Negroes to form, in those cases in which this is justified by general conditions, Negro unions - even if the whites do not hinder the entrance of Negroes into their trade unions.

The formation of purely Negro trade unions in these cases would have the advantage that the Negroes might afterwards join the corresponding trade union, forming a part of the American Federation of Labor or another union of the toilers.

The League of Trade Union Propaganda adopted these fundamental theses unconditionally for wide circulation among the masses.

As a result of this turn of events, there are in existence a considerable number of Negro unions.

Taking into consideration the numbers of the Negro labor class, which, according to incomplete data



for November 1, 1925, in the northern and southern industrial states (Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, West Virginia and both Carolinas) amount to 8½ millions, of whom there are employed in enterprises and on private jobs up to 3½ (sc. millions?) of Negroes of both sexes - the number of the organized Negro workingmen is trifling and scarcely amounts to 10 per cent of the whole number of Negro workingmen.

The purely Negro labor organizations have all arisen in those places where access to white labor unions was closed to Negro workingmen.

The more important of them are:

- 1) The Negro union of Negro metal workers in Virginia.....36,462 persons.
- 2) The trade union of Negro textile workers in Virginia....21,385 "
- 3) The trade union of Negro textile workers in Tennessee...17,250 "

Thanks to the broad and energetic propaganda of the League of Trade Union Propaganda, Negro workingmen are already beginning to be admitted into many labor unions into which access was formerly closed to them. A considerable number of Negroes has already entered into:

- The union of ladies' tailors,
- The union of longshoremen,
- The union of clothing makers.

-5-

So far the efforts of the Negroes and the League of Trade Union Propaganda that is co-operating with them in this respect to secure their admission into the largest unions forming the American Federation of Labor, and into the railwaymen's union, the textile-workers' union, the greater part of the unions of the metallurgical industry and the majority of the unions of heavy industry, have been fruitless.

Thanks to this situation, parallel with propaganda for equalization of the rights of Negro workingmen with those of the whites, genuinely proletarian organizations must afford every sort of assistance to the independent unions of the Negro workingmen, for the sake of the formation of auxiliary fighting bands (druzhiny) for struggle with the bourgeoisie. The progressive industrialization of the southern states is occasioning a tremendous demand for cheap labor, and this demand is being satisfied almost entirely by Negroes.

How intensive is the growth of the number of Negro workingmen is shown by the following statistical data, at the disposal of the statistical bureau of the League of Labor Union Propaganda.

Negro working-  
men.

In heavy industrial establishments  
on January 1, 1921, were employed.....1,311,624

By the end of 1925 (November),  
this number had been increased  
to.....1,587,290  
persons

In the Detroit industrial  
district the number of negroes  
employed at enterprises was..... 386,445 "

In November, 1925..... 520,167 "

These figures clearly illustrate the im-  
portance of the Negro proletariat in the class war.

On the basis of the data and considerations  
adduced, and also of (sc. other) materials and facts,  
the League of Trade Union Propaganda applies to the  
Communist International Executive Committee and the  
Central Soviet of the Profintern with the following  
proposals:

1. For the review of the decision of the  
fifth world congress on the Negro  
question.
2. For the allotment out of the general sum  
of the credits assigned to the North  
American Communist Party, of a separate  
part of subsidies to the Negro movement  
in North America, or in case this shall  
be found inexpedient, for a supplementary  
appropriation for this purpose.
3. For the appointment of a Special Repre-  
sentative of the Profintern for the  
management of the Negro trade union  
movement, with the provision of sums  
of money for his disposition. This

-7-

Representative should be attached to the  
League of Trade Union Propaganda but in  
his activity he should be fully independ-  
ent

With Communist greeting,

Member of the Presidium of the  
League: (Signature illegible)

Executive Secretary of the League  
of Trade Union Propaganda:

JAMES MANLEY.

New York,

January 23, 1926.