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# The Case of John P. Anderson.

## [An Investigation by the Communist Party of America: Hearing held March 22, 1921, transmitted April 14, 1921.]

by Charles Dirba,  
Secretary of Investigating Committee.

A document in the Conintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 31-35.

Jan. 9, 1921.

J. A—n [John P. Anderson]† was sent to Russia in the summer of 1919 by the Federations during the Left Wing disagreements with the Soviet Bureau and before the Communist Party was formally organized.‡

He returned in the spring of 1920 and made a report of his trip, of having signed an agreement with John Reed in regard to the unity of the CP and CLP,§ and then, already from Stockholm, having refused to do anything in the matter, if in this he had to deal with the Soviet Bureau under Martens. He did not say anything about moneys or valuables given him by the CI for the CP.

The UCP delegates, Flynn [Edward Lindgren] and Morgan [Alexander Bilan], upon their return stated that valuables were given to J. A—n [John Anderson] to the amount of about \$25,000, and that the CI wanted to find out why they were not delivered to us, and what became of them.

Later Morgan [Bilan] stated it in writing, as follows:

To the CEC of the CP of A.  
Comrades:—

J. A—n [John Anderson], who has represented your Party at the Communist International, on his departure received a sum of approximately \$25,000 in valuables to be delivered by him to the United Communist movement in America.

As far as the CI has learned, he has failed to do so.

The CI has entrusted me to investigate this matter, and to find out why J. A—n [Anderson] has failed to do so, and what has become of the above mentioned sum.

On the above grounds, I demand that your Party takes up this matter and investigates this case.

After investigation of this case a copy of the report to be presented to me for sending it over to the CI, another copy to be sent by your Executive Committee.

Fraternally,

William Morgan [Alexander Bilan],  
For the Communist International.

The undersigned were elected a committee to investigate this matter for the CEC of the CP.

†- John P. Anderson was the “American” name of a Latvian-American immigrant named Kristap Beika. The name seems to have been adopted by Beika prior to and independently of the move of the American Communist movement underground in the winter of 1919-20. As such, the name will be treated as his “real” name, much in the same way that Alexander Kadikis became Alexander Bilan, Joseph Zack Kornfeder became Joseph Zack, and Jozsef Pogany became John Pepper for the rest of their respective lives.

‡- The details of the antipathy of the suspended Language Federations of the Socialist Party towards the Russian Soviet Government Bureau in New York headed by Ludwig Martens remain to be uncovered. The remainder of the saga in brief: the entire memberships of 7 “Foreign Language” Federations of the Socialist Party were suspended *en masse* from SPA membership by the governing National Executive Committee on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 27, 1919, ostensibly for having endorsed the manifesto of the Left Wing Section. This action was a thinly disguised effort by the outgoing NEC (term constitutionally due to expire June 30, 1919) to annul the SPA’s recently concluded referendum election of a new NEC, which had clearly resulted in a landslide for the endorsed candidates of the organized Left Wing Section. This action of suspending Language Federations by the NEC had the unintended consequence of splitting the revolutionary Socialist movement, as 5 of these suspended organizations — the Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian, and Polish — sought immediate organization of a new party. These semiautonomous groups formed the core of the Communist Party of America from its founding convention in Chicago, Sept. 1-7, 1919. They were joined in the CPA by a rump Yiddish-language organization, the weakest by far of six siblings.

§- John Anderson (CPA) and John Reed (CLP) signed an agreement to unify the two organizations in Moscow on Jan. 20, 1920.

J. A—n [John Anderson] was called to New York for a hearing, a record of which follows. The hearing was held on March 22, 1921.

**Statement by J. A—n [John P. Anderson].**

I was sent to Moscow by the Federations.

When I was ready to come back, the CI gave me jewels, I don't know exactly the value, it might have been as stated by Morgan [Bilan], ten packages, if I remember correctly.

They sent me to Veliky Luki on way to Latvia, I don't remember whether it was the last part of January 1920 or the first part of February.

They referred me to the organization that was supposed to get me across the border, at the head of which was Miram.

When I arrived there, the case was all changed. As the Lettish [Latvian] troops advanced to Latgal, the crossing became very difficult. We had to walk out 70 versts [46 miles] without a rest, and I could [not] stand it, I nearly became a burden to the party.

There was a special Lettish *polk* [technically "regiment" — probably an irregular red unit here], the commander of which was my brother, and they promised to get me across the border without much difficulty.

Everybody knew that if I went alone that I would be searched very thoroughly, and they would easily find the ten packages of jewels.

Then I asked Miram if he could not transport the jewels to Riga, and he said, "Yes, we can do it. All our people are armed, and we guarantee for the transportation."

He referred me to another man, who takes care of all things to be transported — to a special clerk, to whom I gave the packages. And I also gave him 25,000 Russian rubles, 200 Swedish crowns, and 500 Danish crowns, which were given to me for my traveling expenses; also the agreement between Reed and myself in regard to unity, a letter to the IWW, and my credentials from the CI introducing me to foreign parties. I gave the things with the understanding that if I did not claim them in Riga within two weeks, that they should be then delivered to the Central Executive Committee of the Lettish [Latvian] Communist Party.

Then I left the office and departed for the front.

When I reached the front, the *polk* had changed its position from Kalishi to Opochka. The new conditions were unknown to the *polk*, and I had to stay with them for about two weeks until they should find out.

By that time a few people came over from the Lettish [Latvian] side, bringing with them newspapers and reports to the effect that there was white terror in Latvia, that the war zone was extended from Sebesh to Volmar, that they had shot a number of Communists in Valk. So everybody advised me that it was impossible to cross.

There were two main points nearer to Sebesh where they transported and I went to both points, and they did not guarantee that I could get across.

When I left Miram's office they gave me receipts for all the things that I left with them. Since it was so very uncertain, I left the receipts with my other brother Bernhard. It all took about a month, and in that time Miram's office was transferred from Veliky Luki to Pleskau.

As I could not get over, I went down to Sebesh, and from there I went back to Pleskau to Miram's office.

Then I asked them if they could do anything to send me over. They flatly refused. They told me that they had received notice that a group of about 10 or 11 men, who carried part of my things [jewels], had met [White] Lettish troops. That was the same party with which I was supposed to go. At first they met two Lettish officers, one of whom they shot, but the other escaped and reported to the Lettish troops, which caught them in the woods and shot five of them. Then the rest had scattered, each running for himself. Three of them were caught and executed by the Lettish. They did not know what happened with the remaining two or three. At that time they thought that one of them may have come through with his life.

Then I went back to Miram's office and told them that I could not cross the border and asked them if they could send me now. They flatly refused, saying that it was impossible for them.

Then I took the receipts from Bernhard and went with them back to Moscow to the CI. I presented the receipts to Comrade [Ian] Berzin, and verbally told Comrade [Gustav] Klinger the whole story, and they knew about it already. Klinger was the man gave the things [jewels] to me in the first place. I told Klinger that I had given the receipts to Berzin and that I was

ready to give any explanation that they should want.

Berzin told me that I had done very good and wisely, and that he was glad that I was not shot myself; and that it was no use to send comrades this way; that Reed had been caught in Finland; and that now they were going to send everything by other ways; and that I should go back myself alone.

After that they gave me some money for traveling through Murmansk. They gave me 2,000 Swedish crowns, 10,000 Finnish marks, and 10,000 Russian rubles, for traveling expenses only.

Then I went through to Norway almost without any trouble. From Norway I telegraphed my wife in Riga that she had to come immediately to Stockholm. When she arrived at Stockholm she told me part of the story that I have told already.

I did not mention I had given a private letter of my own to be delivered to my wife. I separated the things like that: 1) The Russian rubles and the Swedish crowns, which were meant for my traveling expenses to be delivered to T.A. (my wife) at a certain address in Riga; 2) The rest of the things to be given to the man who would call for them in the name of Kravchenko.

An agent of the Lettish [Latvian] government came to my wife and after a week she was arrested, and then they told her that I had been sending to her the money for Communist propaganda, and pressed her to confess that it was so; and they told her that I had been shot on the border.

I could not tell exactly whether the other things [jewels] were caught by the Lettish government or not, because they were on another name, and they could

not connect them with my wife; and I don't know anything further about them.

### Questioning.

**Q.** *Is Miram your brother?*

**A.** No. My brother was commander of the *polk*. Karklin was commissioner of the *polk*. The commander of sappers told me that they did transport the things [jewels] across the border. The things on the border were very secret, and I don't know the name of the man to whom I delivered the things. Miram knows his name. I cannot remember the name in which the receipts were signed, I did not look closely to how it was signed. When I delivered the receipts to Berzin, he did not question their validity. The last that I know about the receipts they were with Berzin, and I told Klinger that I had given them to Berzin.

**Q.** *When did you deliver the packages into other hands?*

**A.** In the last days of January or first days of February, 1920.

**Q.** *How were the receipts made out?*

**A.** The receipts listed all the things that I gave them, about five or six receipts.

**Q.** *To whom were you to deliver the jewels?*

**A.** The jewels were given to be delivered to the Party whom I represented, that is to the Communist Party, Reed having received valuables for the CLP.†

**Q.** *Did you report about this when you came back?*

**A.** No. I did not report to the CP about these things because that it was all settled over there.

**Q.** *Have you made a report to anybody about your*

†- This aspect of Anderson's story is confirmed by a document recording Comintern foreign appropriations, showing a Jan. 22, 1920 disbursement in the value of 1,008,000 rubles to John Reed, followed by a Jan. 31, 1920 disbursement to Anderson in the value of 1,011,000 rubles. (RTsKhIDNI f. 495, op. 82, d. 1, reprinted as "Document 1" in Klehr, Haynes, & Firsov: *The Secret World of American Communism*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 22-24. The authors of this book badly misinterpreted these nominal ruble values and drew grossly incorrect conclusions based upon their error, claiming "several millions dollars in valuables" were thus funneled into the American Communist movement (*Ibid.*, pg. 24) — an assertion belied by an enormous mass of archival documents of the American Communist movement during the 1920-22 period, all of which clearly indicate that external subsidies were comparatively modest and the American parties chronically broke. As John Reed was taken prisoner in Finland with something in excess of \$15,000 in jewels and valuta on his person, while Alexander Bilan claimed that \$25,000 disbursed to Anderson had gone missing, it seems patently obvious that the actual attempted "2,019,000 ruble" January 1920 subsidy by the Comintern to the American movement via Reed and Anderson had actual value in the range of \$30,000 (double the published estimate of the value taken from Reed) to \$50,000 (double the amount which Bilan claimed Anderson had lost). Bear in mind that of this specific appropriation absolutely *nothing* actually arrived in the United States for use by the American Communist movement. Documentary evidence from the budgets of the United Communist Party and the Communist Party of America at the time of their union indicates actually received Comintern subsidies for the period 1920-21 of \$25,000 and \$19,500, respectively (*See*: the reports of Wagenknecht and Dirba to the Joint Unity Convention of May 1921, available as downloadable files at [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org)).

*traveling expenses?*

**A.** No. I have not reported about the spending of the traveling money. I spent it all. I had to stay four or five weeks in Sweden. Then I bought steamship tickets for myself and for my wife. I had left to her about \$200, which was all seized by the Lettish [Latvian] police, and never returned. The Russian rubles were practically worthless, the 10,000 of them worth probably \$175. I spent about 7,000 of them in Russia; I changed some of them in Sweden, and I have several hundred of them still left. The 10,000 Finnish marks I changed in Sweden and Norway. I spent them all on my living expenses. The steamship tickets cost about 430 crowns each. I will give you a statement of all my expenses from Chicago.

**Q.** *To whom did you give the packages of jewels?*

**A.** I gave the packages all to a clerk in Miram's office, to whom Miram told me to give them. The packages were just plainly wrapped. The number of stones was marked on each package, and when I turned them over, they were counted and the number of stones was shown on the receipts.

**Q.** *Are you a member of the Communist Party now?*

**A.** I am not a member of the CP. I did not connect up with the CP as a member after my return.

**Q.** *How about the agreement on unity?*

**A.** They gave me the job to come back and to unite both parties, but as I would have had to work together and through the Martens Bureau, I refused to do it.

**Q.** *Are you a member of some other party now?*

**A.** I am not a member of any party here. I wanted to join the new labor party, but I did not.

**Q.** *Why did you not join the CP?*

**A.** I did not join the CP because I was mistrusted, that there was suspicion that I had betrayed the Party. They decided not to send me to speak before the branches. The CP convention [2nd: July 13-18, 1920] was held shortly after my return, and I wanted to be there, but they did not invite me.

**Q.** *Did you ask the CEC of the CP to be present at the convention?*

**A.** Officially I did not, I had no chance. The Letts [Latvian Federationists] decided not to arrange meetings for me, and they gave different reasons, that there was no room for meetings, etc. In Chicago they put different questions to me, and I answered them

all. They decided to call a meeting for me, but then they told me later that they could not arrange the meeting.

**Q.** *Did you make an application for membership?*

**A.** I did not.

**Q.** *Why did you not ask for an investigation of the rumors and suspicions?*

**A.** Only a short time later came the letter from you that you were to investigate.

**Q.** *After this investigation, do you have intention to join the Party?*

**A.** No. I went to Russia and presented the case as best I could. I would not deal with Martens, and I asked that they should appoint a man or a bureau with whom both parties should deal and which should be the connecting link between both parties and the CI. They said that we could do that through the German [Berlin] Bureau or through the Amsterdam Bureau. I asked to arrange it through Sweden, money matters, etc., but [Frederik] Ström did not want that. They promised to elect a committee, but Berzin told me that the majority would be against it, and I could not get anything. I went away and said that if they did not appoint a special bureau, and if they wanted us to deal through the Martens Bureau, that I would then decline, and I did decline to do anything for the unity of both parties.

**Q.** *Did you sign an agreement with Reed as to the joining of both Parties?*

**A.** I signed an agreement as to the technical arrangements for calling a joint convention.

**Q.** *You have been here already eight months. When did you hear the rumors about the money questions?*

**A.** About September or October, 1920.

**Q.** *Did you give any report to Martens?*

**A.** No.

#### **Further Statements by J. A—n [John P. Anderson].**

I protest against the spreading of false rumors about me, when Berzin and Klinger knew well about the case, and I demand explanations from the Communist International.

Why am I not in the Communist Party? I do not agree with the tactics of the CP, because the CP

wants to exclude themselves from the rest of the working masses. All their actions are confined in the secret organization. The Russian CP are from time to time getting more and more liberal, drifting away from their original principles; and it is at the same time impossible to rely on the Russian CP to propagate and advocate the principles here, because in the near future we will find ourselves hanging in the air, that the Russian Soviet Government went out of us. We want in this country exclusively all political action in our hands. We should not have anything to do with the Soviet Bureau or such organizations. I cannot express so well now all the points. I will give a written statement on this question together with my statement of the expenses.

This ended the hearing.

Fraternally Submitted,

C. Dobin [Charles Dirba], Sec.

John Stein [???

J. Kartash [???] †

*Investigating Committee.*

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### Statement of Expenses by J. A—n [John Anderson].

The following are the traveling expenses (Swedish crowns):

Hotels and meals, 40 days	960
Two steamship tickets	900
Steamship, RR fares in Sweden	400
Suits of clothes	300
Two pairs of shoes	150
New overcoats	500
Underwear	200
Two RR tickets to Chicago	400

†- J. Kartash was the pseudonym of the Secretary of the CPA's Russian Language Federation.

‡- Marginal note: "It adds up only 4010."

Other expenses 200

**Total in Swedish crowns 4210 ‡**

### Why I did not join the CP.

When I landed in the US I found the tactics of the CP more resembling a religious sect than a political party, and I considered joining the party as a useless waste of time and energy.

Later on the Third International, through its agents Morgan [Bilan] and Flynn [Lindgren], made my work impossible. If such are the tactics of the Third International, I decline to be in any way connected with the latter.

J.P.A.

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To the EC of the CI.

Dear Comrades:—

At your request, transmitted to us by Comrade Morgan [Bilan], we elected an investigation committee to question J. A—n [John Anderson] in reference to the valuables which were entrusted to him for transportation to our Party. Herewith we submit to you minutes of the hearing held, giving all the explanations and statements of J. A—n [Anderson]. The above statements of expenses and attitude toward the Party he sent us just now (April 14, 1921) in writing.

It is up to you now to check up on the statements of J. A—n [Anderson] and pass your decision. Please let us know what your decision is, and if there is anything further you want us to do in the matter.

Fraternally yours,

C. Dobin [Charles Dirba],  
Executive Secretary, CP of A.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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