
Jesse Molle and the Socialist Party

by Bertha Hale White

Published in the *New York Call*, v. 14, no. 184 (July 3, 1921), pg. 7.

(National Office Press Service.)

Over and over again we hear the statement made that the most important issue before the Socialist Party is the question of international affiliation. Important it is, without doubt, unless we interpret international affiliation to mean Moscow affiliation. Affiliation with Moscow is not a question. A year ago Moscow was paramount in our considerations, but since that time the "question" has been answered, indirectly, it is true, but answered, nevertheless, and in no uncertain terms.

At the close of the referendum on international affiliation submitted to the membership following the emergency convention in September 1919, the National Office was confronted with our application for admission. At the first meeting of the National Executive Committee the question was upon the agenda and the Executive Secretary was instructed by the committee to make every possible effort to get into communication with the Communist International.

In order to leave no avenue untried, the Executive Secretary sent a letter applying for affiliation — he sent it in care of the Italian Socialist Party, in care of the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain, and to several individuals in Europe with whom we were in communication.

It was sent out in the press service of the National Office and published generally in the party press. Copies were sent to all the European parties and papers on the foreign mailing list of the National Office, and the text of the application was well known to the United Communist Party and to the Russian Soviet Bureau in New

York City, and both the bureau and the United Communist Party were in constant communication with Moscow. And, when two members of the Socialist Party visited the National Office in April 1920, and asked for a letter of introduction to the comrades of Europe, Comrade Branstetter embraced this opportunity to send another copy of his letter of application.

It is claimed that this is the only copy of our communication that reached Moscow and that when it did reach Moscow it was discredited because our envoy was under suspicion of engaging in counter-revolutionary activities. That is hardly conceivable. Jessie Molle and her husband, Mitri Schwartz, left for Russia in April [1920]. No recognition was given of our application until months later and at that time it was quite evident that full information had reached Moscow concerning the national convention held more than a month after Schwartz had sailed [New York: May 8-14, 1920].

The Schwartz matter has nothing to do with the agenda of the approaching national convention. And yet — I would like to say one word here in justice to one who is unable to speak for herself. Jessie Molle was for years one of the most devoted members of our party. No question of her sincerity or loyalty was ever raised. She did the hard, thankless work of the party organizer, did it cheerfully and efficiently. She engaged in no party quarrels and her record as a party worker is without reproach. It is a tragic injustice that the questionable conduct of a man she married shortly before leaving for Russia should be permitted to involve her when she cannot speak for herself. For Jessie Molle is dead.

We are told that our application for affiliation when presented to the Communist International caused considerable merriment. Whether or not this be true, no answer has ever been received by the Socialist Party of the United States. It is absurd to say that they were prevented from answering by the difficulties of communication — they are able to reach others, why not the Socialist Party?

The famous “21 Points” are not for the Socialist Party. The plan of Moscow is that there shall be a Communist Party in this country to which comrades like Morris Hillquit may not be admitted, and that will submit to an iron-bound Moscow domination. It is preposterous to think that the Socialist Party membership would ever sub-

mit to such tyranny — a membership that would never accept discipline from an official source in all the 20 years of its existence.

After all, the question is not whether or not we want to join forces with Moscow. We are not invited and no matter how humbly we knock at the door and beg admittance we shall be refused. Socialists of America have been told in no uncertain terms that if they want recognition their credentials must be issued by another organization.

We are needlessly concerning ourselves about Moscow and what we are to do about Moscow. We have quarreled about our international position until our discouraged membership has melted away. “No matter what we may have to say to Moscow afterwards,” reads the resolution on international affiliation adopted after the emergency convention. We can have nothing to say to Moscow that will impress Moscow in the least until we have regained the position we had before the disruptionists within our ranks began their deadly work. When we are once more a live, fighting organization, an effective instrument in the struggle for working class emancipation, we shall have a strength that will force recognition and a modification of the terms laid down by Moscow — the terms offered to the Communist movement of America, but which are not offered to the Socialist Party.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · April 2014 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.