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# Debate on the Press and the Society for Medical Aid to Soviet Russia at the 3rd Russian All-Colonial Congress: New York City — March 8, 1921

by Bureau of Investigation Undercover Agent “P-132”

From report “In Re: Third Russian All-Colonial Convention of United States and Canada, Russian Professional Unions, and Association of Russian Trade Unions and Educational Societies; Astoria Hall, 62-64 East 4th Street, New York City,” DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA collection M-1085, reel 936, file 202600-1217.

March 8 [1921].

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## 6. Workers' Newspaper.

A report was made by Comrade **Mikhailov**, who explained to the delegates how *Workman and Peasant [Rabochii i Krest'ianin]* and *Bread and Freedom [Khleb i Volia]* were published, and that too much intelligence was responsible for the downfall of that newspaper, and finally the same were put out of business by the Department of Justice. After the raids, when all organizations were disrupted by the enemies of the working class, the *Russkii Golos* and *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* were doing very good business selling medicines to the Russians and filling them with all kinds of crooked advertisements, neglecting at the same time the revolutionary education of the workers. Several members of the Executive Committee of the Second All-Colonial [New York: Jan. 6-9, 1919] decided that it was imperative to start another workers' newspaper and *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia* was organized. After the first issue the place was raided by the Department of Justice, the editors beaten and forced to suspend publication for a few days. Later other comrades were found who organized the same, and notwithstanding the efforts of the enemies, the newspaper is being sent out regularly and is

serving the workers.

After his report there was a general discussion on the subject, and especially as to what policy will be taken in the future by the *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia*. Mikhailov said: “Comrades, you all know that we are Anarchists. Why should we cover up our beliefs and teachings by organizing schools and various educational societies? And that applies to *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia*. Once for all we ought to say clearly that it is an Anarchist newspaper and establish definitely its true character and purpose.”

Comrade **Stotsky**, the chairman, called Mikhailov to order and told him to keep away from all revolutionary expressions, as it was not known who was present at these conventions.

Delegate **Sivko** said: “You are an Anarchist; well, I am a Communist, and if you demand the Anarchist policy I demand the Communist, and I will never consent that Anarchist propaganda be taught through *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia*.” He was also called to order by the Chairman.

Delegate **Rechtand** called the attention of the delegates to the fact that this convention was advertised as non-partisan and begged the delegates to abide by that announcement.

**Dodokin** then said: “Once for all we must state clearly that we are Anarchists, because we are nothing else but Anarchists.” He further said he would give his

support to *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia* if it would support Anarchistic doctrines.

**Sivko** proposed that if they were to publish Anarchistic propaganda in *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia*, then they also must invite some Communist theoreticians to write their propaganda in *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia*, in order to give to the Russian workers an opportunity to learn all about Anarchism and Communism.

Finally the delegated decided to request the Resolution Committee to draw up a resolution with the understanding that not every delegate was satisfied with the non-partisan plan.

The delegates also decided to boycott all other privately owned Russian newspapers. At the same time, Mikhailov and Khorodienko announced that they intend to resign as editors of *Amerikanskaia Izvestiia*, but later Khorodienko decided he would remain, but time must be given him to recuperate on account of his illness.

The session was adjourned.

A special meeting or session was then called at **Manhattan Lyceum**, 66 East 4th Street, at 9 pm. **Vyshlov** acting as chairman, and he introduced **Comrade Zak** [J. Matneev, Detroit], who made a brief address in which he said that the session was called especially for the purpose of acquainting the delegates and the New York workers, especially, with the facts concerning the Society for Medical Aid to Soviet Russia, and its representatives, who were found to be corrupting that organization and stealing money contributed for the medical aid, and that he believes that the workers will not let any politician hoodwink them any longer and will taken their medical aid into their own hands and put it under their control.

The committee, which was examining different documents showing that the frauds were committed at the Detroit Branch of the Society for Medical Aid to Soviet Russia, made a report that the found all documents to be true; then Comrade **Sivko**, who brought all the crookedness to light in Detroit, reported how he found same out. He said that last year, in June,

several Detroit societies began to suspect the Society for Medical Aid of being crooked but continued to support it. The men who were running that branch were **Dr. [A.M.] Rovin, Saks, [Boris] Roustam-Bek,** and **Dr. Mendelson**. When the Russian organization of Detroit requested the above-mentioned officials to show them their accounts and other financial documents, they refused to do so, but at one of the meetings they informed Sivko that the Russian organizations could send their representatives to cooperate with the Committee for the Society for Medical Aid. The committee was duly elected but the Society for Medical Aid refused to have any dealings with it. Finally it was found that there was a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Medical Aid, and a committee was sent to the meeting, and there they secured possession of all their documents.

After examination of all documents, our committee found that there was more than \$2,000 missing that could not be accounted for. This was called to the attention of the members of the Medical Aid Society, Detroit, and they requested that we return the documents to them, which was refused. Later they were exposed and the rest is known.

After that a new Society of Medical Aid to Soviet Russia was organized by the Detroit Revolutionary Organizations, and it is controlled by them today. He stated he believed this crooked work is going on in other branches of the Medical Aid to Soviet Russia which are controlled by the committee from New York, and it will be imperative to reorganize all those branches and place them under direct control of our organization.

During his speech several members of the Communist Party were trying to break up the meeting, but they were beaten up by members of the Union of Russian Workers, especially by Kiselev, who threw them down the stairs.

At the end of the session the chairman proposed that a collection be taken up for the medical relief of soviet Russia, and over \$100 was contributed.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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