

13. Appeal to the 10th Plenum of the ECCI on the Last Comintern Address and the Expulsions and Removals Now Taking Place in the Party, 10 July 1929¹⁴

...

The Struggle against the Right Danger

We categorically reject the characterization of our Party and its leadership contained in the Address as absolutely without political foundation. We stand today, as in the past, for a Leninist policy of self-criticism to aid the Party to profit by a correction of its mistakes. But what is demanded of us by the Address is self-abuse and Party destruction. We do not consider advertizing of oneself as petty-bourgeois politicians, rotten diplomats, unprincipled intriguers, right-wingers, exceptionalists and splitters as having anything in common with Bolshevik self-criticism. We do not consider mastery of the art of confessional self-abuse and spitting in one's face a prerequisite for Communist leadership.

The charge is made that the previous Party leadership was against the line of the ninth Plenum of the Communist International. The falsity of this charge is proved by the fact that our thesis, the thesis of the previous leadership, unanimously adopted by our February 1928 Plenum, was endorsed by the Communist International in its letter of 18 April 1928 – *subsequent to the ninth Plenum*.

The statement of the Political Committee on the expulsion of comrade Lovestone accepts bodily the position of the document presented by Cannon, Bittelman and Foster to the sixth World Congress of the Communist International, ie the Trotskyist counterrevolutionary document entitled

¹⁴ First published as a thirty-eight page mimeographed document. Reprinted as part of a four-page broadsheet entitled 'Appeal to the Comintern', July 1929.

'The Right Danger in the American Party', which was categorically rejected by the sixth World Congress. This is manifested in the estimate of American Imperialism and in the estimate of the Party and its previous leadership.

The sixth Congress was chiefly characterised by its fight against the Right danger. It was this Congress which categorically rejected the accusation against the then Party leadership as a right-wing leadership and instead declared that *the policies of the Party led to a situation where our Party became the 'stalwart leader of fierce class battles'.*

In the declaration on Lovestone's expulsion, the new Political Committee has adopted the line of the reservations of Johnstone, Bittelman, Gomez, Siskind etc., to the thesis of the sixth World Congress, and made these reservations the basis of this platform.

The delegation of the American Party made a genuine contribution to the sixth World Congress, in spite of the reservations of Johnstone and his associates to the decision of the Congress and the vote of Gomez for the Social-Democratic theory of decolonization. Does comrade Weinstone, in denouncing our Party's role at the Congress, now repudiate his contribution to the program commission, where he turned in the material prepared for him by comrade Pepper? Does he now repudiate his sixth World Congress speech prepared for him by comrade Lovestone – against the document, 'The Right Danger in the American Party', which he now makes his own platform? Or does Wicks now condemn and repudiate himself for having exposed at the sixth World Congress that Foster, Bittelman, and Cannon drew inspiration for their criticism of the then Party leadership from Trotsky's 'Appeal' to the World Congress?...

At a special secret session of the Seniorens Convent (leading Steering Committee) of the sixth World Congress of the Communist International, under the chairmanship of comrade Bukharin, comrade Stalin presented the following declaration unanimously adopted by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 30 June 1928: 'The undersigned members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declare before the Committee of Elders (Seniorens Convent) of the Congress that they most emphatically protest against the circulation of rumours that there are dissensions among the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union'.

This declaration emphasised that there was no Right danger or right-wingers or even differences in the Russian Political Bureau.

Are we to be condemned now for then believing in this declaration? We presumed that Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Kuusinen, Manuilsky and Kun also then believed in this declaration together with us. Perhaps it is because of this

defense of the line of the sixth Congress and our belief in the above declaration that we are now being persecuted and expelled. *It is obvious that it is not we who are departing from the line of the sixth Congress but it is those who are now expelling and persecuting us who are deserting and betraying the line of the sixth Congress...*

We Repudiate Party-Splitting Charges

We repudiate most emphatically the charge that we are trying to split the Party. *We stand unreservedly for the unity of the Party.* We are among the founders and builders of the Party and fought at all times to strengthen and preserve its unity.

It is under the cover of this ranting about Party splitting that *the present 'leadership' is actually splitting and wrecking the Party.*

Much is being said and written by [Max] Bedacht and [Jack] Stachel about the cable dated Berlin, 15 May. Comrade Bedacht has lied to the membership and the Communist International about the cable. He says he had nothing to do with it. He claims he broke with the delegation on 14 May and this cable was sent on 15 May. Here are the facts: this cable was written in Moscow by comrade Bedacht in consultation with comrades Gitlow, Lovestone and Wolfe on Sunday 12 May, immediately after the last full meeting of the American Commission. It was forwarded from Moscow on 13 May and cabled from Berlin to New York on 15 May.

First of all: we admit the serious error in sending this cable. Secondly, it was not a cable aiming to split the Party, but one aiming to hold the Party against the degenerate, bankrupt, opportunist Fosterite minority, if it attempted to seize the Party apparatus on the basis of the Communist International 'Address'. *Stachel and Minor fully agreed with this policy before the delegation left.* In fact, Stachel and Minor prepared a list of names of comrades to whom all Party property could be transferred in case the Communist International would decide, despite the appeal of the delegation to Moscow and the decisive will of the membership as represented in the Convention, to turn the Party over to the minority. It must be emphasised that every leading comrade of the majority and every steadfast majority delegate to the sixth National Convention [4–10 March, 1929], entertained then the most vigorous conviction that *to turn the Party over to the minority would spell the ruin of the American section of the Comintern.* It is for this reason and on the basis of this policy that Stachel, even before the delegation left for Moscow, arranged with one of the attorneys handling the Party's legal matters to make it impossible for [Will]

Weinstone to take away through legal channels, the Workers Center from the Party in New York.

Minor and Stachel must explain to the Communist International why they hid this cable from the Party and the Communist International until 4 June – almost three weeks. When we sent the cable on 15 May we aimed at preserving and not splitting the Party. But if Stachel, Minor, [John] Ballam, [Henry] Puro, [Louis] Engdahl, [M.J.] Olgin, [Jacob] Mindel were immediately convinced that it was a Party-splitting cable, why did they keep it a secret for so long?

We must especially ask comrade Bedacht why he concealed this cable *and his connection with it* and why he continues to do so. Who wrote this cable? It was comrade Bedacht. Who knew its exact contents? It was only comrades Bedacht, Gitlow, Lovestone and Wolfe. Who agreed to send definite instructions to preserve the Party from seizure by the minority? It was the entire delegation. Why are Bedacht, Stachel, Minor & Co. so interested in trying to make it appear that this cable was the work only of comrade Lovestone and to hide their own responsibility in this matter? Why does not especially comrade Bedacht come forward to be Communist and honest enough to tell *his entire leading role* in this mistake, as we have done regarding ourselves here? And why does not Stachel tell the Party and the Communist International how it is that this cable is made public only now when the New York national majority top caucus decided to burn it and he Stachel guaranteed its being burned?

Such practices and methods as resorted to by Stachel, Bedacht and Minor are the crassest manifestations of 'rotten petty-bourgeois diplomacy', unprincipledness and unscrupulous careerism that have ever been manifested in our Party or in any other section of the Communist International. This explains why these careerists are mistrusted by the Party membership and why it is that the outstanding leaders of the Communist International – despite superficial appearances – deeply distrust these comrades who are so ready to believe and say and do anything at all, regardless of conviction or principle, for the mere sake of holding on to their Party jobs.

The Work of the Delegation

The Delegation sent by the sixth National Convention of our Party to the Communist International was the most authoritative and representative one ever sent by our Party to the Communist International. In it there was to be found the entire first-line of leadership of the Party, the most tried and experienced proletarian comrades of the principal industrial districts of the Party. The delegation, regardless of any mistakes it may have made, was and is

animated solely by the best interests of the Communist International and our Party.

We fought energetically for the Communist International's and the Party's interests. But the delegation was up against a very difficult situation. It was faced with a decision made in the Communist International – for the first time in its history – that 'individual conversations between members of the Commission and the delegates should be avoided'.

In utter violation of the line of the sixth World Congress of the Communist International, of the decision of the September 7 1928 session of the Communist International Political Secretariat, of the Communist International's 'Open Letter' to our Party dated 21 November 1928, of the Comintern's 'Open Letter' to our sixth National Convention and even long before the delegation had a chance really to present its viewpoint as to what occurred at and after the Convention, there was prepared, in agreement with comrades Stalin and Molotov, a resolution for the last German Party Convention in which *the entire American Party majority was already branded as opportunists early in April 1929*. We quote from this resolution:

The opportunists of the Communist Party of Germany played a role of an outpost of the international opportunist line in the ranks of the Communist International which, under the leadership of the Russian Rights (Bukharin group), are trying to deflect and to falsify Bolshevik policies. Comrade Bukharin already showed at the sixth World Congress of the Communist International his insufficient firmness, his uncertainty and wavering on the questions of the Third Period, of relative stabilization, on the struggle against the 'left' Social Democracy, the necessity for Bolshevik discipline and the struggle against the conciliators. While comrade Bukharin was publicly declaring his agreement with the decisions of the sixth World Congress, he was trying in reality to form a factional bloc with Kamenev against the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Rights and conciliators in Germany are ideologically and politically connected with all opportunist groupings in the Communist Parties of Italy (Serra), France, England, America (Lovestone, Pepper), Czecho-Slovakia (Hais, Jilek), Switzerland (Humbert-Droz), Austria (Schlamm), and others.

Thus the line of the Address was already established before the delegation could make its case and regardless of the case it would make.

When the above paragraph came to the knowledge of the delegation, there was deep disgust in our ranks. *Comrade Bedacht proposed that we demand our*

passports. The Steering Committee of the delegation flatly rejected this proposal of comrade Bedacht.

Then came the statement of 9 May written by comrade Bedacht and adopted by the delegation. It was the sharpest statement the delegation issued in Moscow. The extent to which comrade Bedacht went further than the rest of the delegation in indignation and militancy against the line of the decision is evidenced in the 'Dear Mama letters' – a series of reports written by him in German to the Chicago comrades, through his wife . . .

A Panicky, Unprincipled Clique in Action

The comrades will recall how the previous CEC gave even the counter-revolutionary Trotskyist Cannonites every opportunity to present their case and how the Party press even printed their statement to the membership before they were expelled, and here, in the case of comrade Lovestone, a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, charged with a technical, formal violation of discipline, the Stachels, Minors, Bedachts, etc., blindly and madly rushed into expulsion with utter disregard and flagrant violation of every guarantee of the Comintern and Party statutes accorded to every Communist. For every Communist it is elementary that Leninist methods require that ideological campaigns are the Bolshevik methods of popularizing decisions and that organizational measures should be resorted to reluctantly and only as a last step. But this panicky puppet leadership is incapable of an ideological campaign and willingly and frivolously sets out to wreck the Party with organizational measures – removals and expulsions – in place of an ideological campaign.

There is method in this madness! Stachel, Bedacht and co. hope in this fashion to expose to the CI their super-loyalty with the aim of being allowed to 'save the majority for the majority', to 'save their Party posts', to 'hold onto the Party apparatus'. It is on this basis that there was recently propounded by comrades Stachel and Minor in a Stachel-Bedacht caucus the novel but dangerous anti-Leninist doctrine of 'What is the use of talking about honesty amongst ourselves?' It is on record in the stenogram of the Political Committee that Minor declared: 'Honesty is a foreign term imported from an enemy-class. It belongs in the columns of *The Nation* and *The New Republic*'.

We call upon the Comintern to help the membership sweep out this rubbish blocking the forward march of our Party . . .

We believe that there have been some serious errors committed by the Comintern in its treatment of our Party. If every party of the Comintern is to be

an organic part of the Comintern, then the parties should be treated as *parties* and not as a collection of groups and factions – as the American Party has been treated. Especially since the sixth World Congress, the Petrovskys, Losovskys and Mingulins have been given too much of a free hand in maneuvering and manipulating in the pettiest phases of the inner affairs of our Party. For details, we refer the comrades to the documentary material we presented to the last American Commission. This gave rise to a situation where the American Party was 'suspended on cables'. We could not handle even the smallest organizational or technical matters without fear that some member of the international caucus (of which Foster and Bittelman were an organic part and of which the 'corridor caucus' was an international expression) in the Comintern apparatus would not overrule us.

As a result of this system, Party democracy, an essential part of Leninism, has been thrown on the scrap heap. The overruling of our last Party Convention – without any political basis whatsoever and in utter violation of the line of the sixth World Congress – a convention speaking for over ninety percent of the Party and its best and most tried proletarian ranks, was only the logical, inevitable outcome of not treating our Party as an *organic* section of the Comintern, as a *Party* . . .

The 10th Plenum should overrule the Address to our Party and put an end to the paralysing, destructive policy of terror, suspensions, removals and expulsions and the raising of unprincipledness into a system which prevails in our Party today. Thus only will the unity and the growth of the American section of the Comintern be hastened and assured.

Yours for the Comintern!

Yours for the Communist Party of the United States of America!

With communist greetings,

Benjamin Gitlow
Jay Lovestone
William Miller
Tom Myerscough
Edward Welsh *
W.J. White
Bertram D. Wolfe

*Comrade Welsh associates himself with this Appeal to the Comintern except for certain references to facts and events previous to his entry into the Party.

P.S. Comrade Alex Noral is still in Moscow. His viewpoint was last expressed in a statement signed by him on 24 May 1929:

While still maintaining our disagreement with the 'Open Letter' and its organizational instructions, and our conviction that they will not prove helpful to our Party, we delegates to the CI, elected by the sixth National Convention of our Party, hereby categorically repudiate all charges of resistance to the Comintern decisions, and call upon the Party membership to take no steps to resist or hinder the execution of the decisions of the ECCI. We pledge ourselves to this effect.

P.S. Comrades Otto Huiswood and Ella Reeve Bloor also signed the statement of 24 May 1929, quoted above.

July 10, 1929.