
Statement to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America from the Lithuanian Bureau on the Proposed Reorganization of the Party. [circa March 1923]

by K. Povas

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI f. 515, op. 1, d. 233, ll. 50-52.

To the CEC.

Dear Comrades:—

Regarding the proposed reorganization of the underground Party, the Lithuanian Bureau declares that the reorganization is desirable in as much as it makes the Party apparatus more elastic, the structure of the Party less complicated, thus bringing about a more direct relation between the rank and file and the CEC. To this end we should devote our energy to its utmost. Undoubtedly this will result in the growth of the underground organization and the strengthening of the communist forces generally.

However, the Lithuanian Bureau is opposed to the proposed amalgamation of federation bureaus and Party committees prior to the convention of the underground Party.† The latest reorganization of the proposed CEC is contrary to the decisions and spirit of the 2nd Convention [Bridgman, MI: Aug. 17-22, 1922]; it actually forces upon the Party such a basic reform for which the CEC has no mandate. If the last reorganization plan is carried out in its details it will result

in a great demoralization within the underground organization; it will even endanger the coming convention (in view of the fact that the legal possibilities are as yet uncertain).

We, of course, are not opposed to the holding of joint meetings of various units of the Party and the LPP [Workers Party of America] whenever an occasion demands it.

If not formally then in fact a propaganda is [being] broadcast from the Center of the Party for artificially raising the underground organization into open existence. This is the actual if not formal policy of the “tops” of the Party. The hastened call of the convention has no other than the above purpose; there are no other problems that require an emergency convention. The actual reorganization plan can be effected without calling of a convention.

The attempt to force the Party into open existence is in full swing at a time when the CEC itself admits that the underground organization is still very weak. Such an experiment may result in a great chaos among the membership and may entirely cast aside the most important task of the hour — the reorganization of the underground

†- The 3rd and final convention of the underground CPA was ultimately held April 7, 1923 in New York City. This conclave, attended by just 19 delegates, officially liquidated the underground party organization.

Party and the strengthening of its forces as proposed by the CEC in its latest "Party Statement." The communists always concentrate their forces and energy on a given object at a given moment; but if at one and the same time we make attempts to accomplish several objects; if in view of the proposed reorganization we will start a discussion on the advisability of coming into the open, then the most important campaign, the slogan to build up the Party will be in vain; it will disappear in the midst of a pro and con talk about liquidation. It is a most disastrous thing when we raise new issues before we have settled the old ones, especially since the raising of these new issues are not demanded either by the time or the circumstances.

Really, has there been such a significant change in the political conditions of the country that would warrant an attempt to so lightly risk the very life of the Party?

The arrests and trials are continued without cessation; new harnesses are being created by the master class to muzzle the foreign-born workers — men who compose the bulk of our Party; the Michigan trial is not over. Whence the optimism?

[Or:] although the political conditions have not changed to any significant extent, perhaps our Party has become such a powerful factor that it can withstand the onslaughts of reaction?

The CEC knows that this is not true.

Nay, more; in such a great experiment, i.e., in its attempt to artificially raise the Party to open existence, the CEC should have had at least the majority of the Party membership solidly behind the proposed plan. Is this so? The overwhelming rejection of the CEC's plan by the membership almost everywhere in the presence of the representatives of the CEC does not indicate such a condition. So far as we know the same spirit prevails among the bulk of the Lithuanian membership. All signs indicated that this new experiment is bound to demoralize the whole work of both, the Party [CPA] and the LPP [WPA].

Only a short time ago the CEC sent out in-

structions to draw into the underground organization all the healthy elements of the LPP [WPA]. Do you suppose that these elements will come in when they become aware of our determination to disband the underground Party? Besides, this unnecessary controversy in the organization will surely result in a still further decrease in membership. Beyond doubt many comrades will get disgusted with the never-ending controversies and will leave the movement.

So you see, comrades, what may happen in every few months new "salutary" plans are created; if without first putting into effect the decisions of the last convention we will all of a sudden make preparations for a new convention and devise new "salutary" plans for the salvation of the Party. Under such circumstances the work of our organization will be inconsequential, its policies will be incidental policies, its political traditions will become extinct.

As to the LPP [WPA]. We stand for its most strenuous growth in strength and influence; nevertheless, we must declare that this can only be attained by readjusting its internal affairs rather than by introducing new resolutions and new artificial plans. With us, the Lithuanians, the main obstacle against the growth of the LPP [WPA] are its dues. What of this unceasing talk about getting in contact with the masses when the high dues stand as a barrier between us and those masses? If the dues of the LPP [WPA] would be fixed somewhere about 35¢ [per month], the dues in the underground could be increased in proportion. The LPP [WPA] would then begin to grow and the activities of its members would increase accordingly. Until we solve our financial question in a proletarian manner we will not be able to make progress. This, as far as we know, is the prevailing opinion in every federation.

We had the pleasure to note in *The Communist* (#12) that the Lithuanian Federation is the best functioning federation. Always guided by the interests of the movement, we did all we could to

liquidate the crisis of the past year. Without hardly getting any financial assistance from the Party we have conducted our affairs by means of contributions of our comrades; we issued our official organ [*Vilnis*] almost regularly and sent out bulletins; we have gradually regained the positions that were lost during the [Central Caucus] factional fight. We are convinced that we could double our LPP [WPA] Section within a short time if the financial question is properly solved. We were about to start a drive for membership for the underground Party as per the new slogan of the CEC; and it is therefore especially painful to us when new schemes for artificially coming into the open are again created at a time when fundamental organizational problems are not yet in order. Such maneuvers can only bring despair, apathy, and dissention among the rank and file. And for the approaching calamity in the organization full responsibility rests with the CEC, the CEC which, it must be remembered, was elected upon the platform for strengthening the underground organization and the LPP [WPA] accordingly.

Fraternally submitted,

The Lithuanian Bureau,

K. Povas,
Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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