

On the Case of Comrade Benjamin Gitlow

Statement Of The National Committee

We publish below the statement issued by the National Committee of the Communist Party (Opposition) on the resignation of Comrade Gitlow from the group.—Editor.

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At the very outset of our existence as an organized group, the National Council of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Opposition) declared officially ("Revolutionary Age", December 15, 1929):

"Our struggle has never been nor can it ever be an appendix to any individual or group in the C. P. S. U., victorious or defeated. While we have always condemned the anti-bolshevik methods used by the Stalin leadership in the struggle against Comrade Bukharin on the Russian questions, yet our struggle has never been based upon or associated with the line of Comrade Bukharin on these questions. Indeed the Russian questions never became issues in our struggle . . . Our struggle is based exclusively upon the tasks of overcoming the present crisis in the Comintern and of restoring it and our party to a Leninist line."

This fundamental viewpoint, which, in fact, laid down the political basis of the existence of our group, was adopted **unanimously** and was reiterated **unanimously** on several occasions until a few months ago

Toward the beginning of 1931, the National Council of our group **unanimously** adopted a resolution on the "Russian question" in which we fully endorsed the general line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in socialist construction but sharply condemned the factional inner-party course of the Stalin leadership of the C.P.S.U. This resolution was also repeatedly endorsed **unanimously** as late as June 1932. Comrade Gitlow, as an outstanding leader of our group, fully participated in all these deliberations and entirely approved the unanimous position of our organization.

At about the time of our Second National Conference (September 1932), Comrade Gitlow and a few other comrades began to develop a different position, to the effect that not only was the general line of the C. P. S. U. in economic construction basically wrong, but that the "Russian question is the paramount question" so that "our position on the Russian question determines whether or not our group has a principled justification for existence." Comrade Gitlow's views were presented to the Second National Conference of the Communist Opposition and were decisively rejected by a large majority. For further clarification of the issue, the National Committee organized a most thorough post-conference discussion, in the units and in the press, under conditions of the most extreme freedom of discussion for Comrade Gitlow and those agreeing with him. Finally, when the membership rejected his viewpoint in no uncertain terms, Comrade Gitlow declared that the question was to him a "decisive question of fundamental principle" and that he therefore resigned from the American Communist Opposition. In this connection, it should be noted that, at the very beginning of the discussion, at the first New York membership meeting, Comrade Gitlow had already resigned from the group and only withdrew his resignation under pressure of the expressed will of the membership. So far, Comrade Gitlow remains alone in his action; not a single one of his very few followers has taken the step of breaking with our group.

In the course of the discussion the grave errors of Comrade Gitlow on the "Russian question" were brought out and made clear to everyone. But even more fundamental was Comrade Gitlow's attempt to revise the very political basis of existence of our group, by making the "Russian question" the

"paramount question" and thereby trying to replace our efforts to root our Opposition movement in the conditions of the class struggle and the labor movement of this country by demoralizing speculations upon factional fights and "new turns" in the C. P. S. U. Indeed, the mechanical and artificial transference of issues and factional alignments from the C. P. S. U. to the Communist Parties of the capitalist world, of which Comrade Gitlow has now suddenly become the champion, is regarded by the International Communist Opposition as precisely a root cause of the present crisis in the world Communist movement. For our group to adopt the viewpoint of Comrade Gitlow on this question, would mean to take the steep road to liquidation or else to our conversion into a phrase-mongering sect on the model of the Trotskyites, without roots in our own conditions, with eyes always fixed in unhealthy speculation upon factional developments in the C. P. S. U.

The absurdity of the charge made by Comrade Gitlow that we are "adopting a backstairs policy of getting back into the official Communist Party" is evident from every word and deed of the Communist Opposition. The sharpness and effectiveness of our struggle against the sectarian policies of the official C. P. have been constantly increasing and our organized strength consequently mounting. At the same time, our struggle for Communist unity has been growing more intense, Communist unity on the basis of full party democracy, on the basis of the conditions laid down by Comrade Gitlow himself in his recent pamphlet "Some Plain Words About Communist Unity." We need no "backstairs policy" because our fight for unity is conducted fully in the open before the party membership and the labor movement!

In spite of his sharp differences on important questions, we declare that place is still open for Comrade Gitlow in our group. Within the limits of democratic centralism, Comrade Gitlow is guaranteed his right to maintain his views, to defend and agitate for them when these questions are under discussion, provided only that he undertakes the elementary responsibility of standing on the official platform of the Communist Opposition outside of the group.

Whether Comrade Gitlow will see fit to take his place again in our ranks, remains with him. In any case, we can only reiterate: The struggle for rehabilitation of the Communist movement is a struggle above all individuals, whoever they may be. It is a struggle of principle, which we, as part of the International Communist Opposition, shall carry on until the bolshevik unity of the world Communist movement is restored!

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