
The Situation in the Lithuanian Federation.

by Joseph Stilson [“Edward Riley”]

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The disruptive activities of Henry [George Ashkenuzi], Moore [John Ballam], Dow [Charles Dirba] & Co. find their reflection also in the Lithuanian Federation. But with us it was Leon [???], Zemotis [???], and a few others who have been working conscientiously and to the best of their abilities to disrupt and break our organization. They have succeeded, of course, in demoralizing certain sections of our Federation, but the bulk of it — those comrades that concern themselves primarily with the welfare of the movement — repudiated the leadership of Leon [???] and his like and have lined up solidly behind the party.

Here is how it happened. About 14 or so comrades of New York and vicinity met in a caucus, and then and there pledged themselves (1) to unceasingly engage in counterattack upon the pseudo-leaders and pseudo-revolutionaries within the Federation, and (2) to support the CEC in its legal activities.

The start was made, of course, without any connections with the outside towns, and without any treasury. Immediately thereafter the Lithuanian Language Bureau was reorganized by the CEC. Now the caucus was enlarged to about 30 comrades and made its best efforts to advise the CEC on matters pertaining to the Lithuanian Federation. The new Bureau extended its activities beyond the lines reached by the caucus. Special organizers were sent to various localities, covering

their own expenses, for there was not a cent in the treasury.

The first significant unit that lined up with the new Bureau was the District 3 [Philadelphia] comrades. And thereafter the numbers of the followers of Leon [???] began to diminish so rapidly that at this moment, which is the moment of the split, the insurgents search in vain for their “solid Federation behind them.”

Three most important districts, namely Nos. 2 [New York], 3 [Philadelphia], and 5 [Chicago], declared unreservedly to remain in the party. Leon’s [???] own branch recently expelled him from its meeting; District 8 [San Francisco], 9 [Seattle], and 12 [Minneapolis] are with the party, though the membership is small in those districts; District 10 [Buffalo] — if not 100% with the party, then 2/3 are more than assured; District 6 [Detroit] — 50-50; District 4 [Cleveland] — 1/3 with the party; so is District 1 [Boston]. District 11 [Pittsburgh] is with the opposition; District 7 [St. Louis] until recently was with the opposition, but now one half of District 7 has repudiated the disrupters of the party. Adding together the strength of the insurgents, we find that only most backward localities have followed the slogan of “pure revolutionaries,” viz: Pittsburgh, part of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and scattered groups in the coal fields of Penn-

†- Joseph Stilson, was born Juozas Stasiulevicius on August 8, 1891 in Vartuose (Kapsuko raion), Lithuania. He apparently changed his name to Joseph Stilson when he came to America in 1904. Stilson was the Chicago-based Translator-Secretary of the Lithuanian Socialist Federation during the split of 1919, playing a leading role along with Alexander Stoklitsky and Nicholas Hourwich of the Russian Federation in the founding of the old Communist Party of America. A member of the first CEC of the unified CPA, Stilson and Russian Federation veteran J. Wilenkin broke the factional gridlock on that body when they began crossing over and voting *en bloc* with the 5 former members of the UCP in the summer of 1921. The organizational changes initiated by this group prompted a split of the 3 members of the CEC in the minority (Dirba, Ballam, and Ashkenuzi), who organized themselves as a formal opposition calling itself the “Central Caucus” and peeling away major parts of 5 of the old CPA’s 6 language organizations from the unified CPA — the largest of these groups being the Lithuanian Federation. Stilson died May 18, 1962 at the age of 70 in New York City.

sylvania and Southern Illinois, where there never was any effective movement nor can it be expected to develop one for some time to come. Now, if we bear in mind the fact that all the industrial centers (with the exception of a minority in Cleveland) are solidly opposed to the insurgents, we can easily perceive the quality of the element that went over to the opposition. Nor can the opposition get any credit for Cleveland — the best and most conscious element is with the party. When the opposition had a “majority,” the following incident will show just what this “majority” consisted of: They held their conference of the district. Twelve “regular” and “fraternal” delegates were present. A question was raised thus: “Suppose the Comintern instructs us to obey the CEC decisions regarding legal services. Shall we comply?” Yes — 1; no — 10; abstaining from voting — 1. Since then, the majority of the Cleveland membership has declared for us.

From the above incident it is obvious that, perhaps, the split in the Lithuanian Federation has only cleansed the party of some of the non-communistic elements. If, however, we would make a closer analy-

sis of the quality of the whole material that bolted the Federation, we would find the following characters: (1) several leaders, semi-intellectuals, who lost their positions on account of reorganization of the Language Bureau; (2) few candidates for leadership who have memorized several sentences from the Theses of the Second Congress, including that of the “armed insurrection”; these fellows consider everyone a counter-revolutionary unless he shouts for armed insurrection a1; (3) a group of working men who have the best of intentions but lack the understanding of even the primary aspects of the class struggle. The latter, for obvious reasons, can very well be led by any phrase revolutionary.

All the conscious, intelligent element, true revolutionaries, remained with the party. It must be added that there are no tendencies of liquidation amongst the Lithuanian comrades. They have no liquidators, and they are confident that if there are such creatures in the party, the CEC will take care of them as it did of those who were sick with leftism and pseudo-revolutionism.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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