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Speeches on the Communist Party USA

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Compiled here are three speeches given by Comrade Stalin on the struggle against factionalism within the Communist Party USA. These speeches were delivered to the American Commission of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, May 6, 1929 and to the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the American Question, May 14th, 1929.

I. Speech Delivered to the American Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI, May 6, 1929

Comrades, since quite a few speeches have been delivered here and the political position of both groups in the Communist Party of the United States of America has been sufficiently clarified, I do not intend to speak at great length. I shall not deal with the political position of the leaders of the majority and the minority. I shall not do so since it has become evident during the course of the discussion that both groups are guilty of the fundamental error of exaggerating the specific features of American capitalism.

You know that this exaggeration lies at the root of every opportunist error committed both by the

factional groups will perish if it continues to be stubborn, if it does not submit to the will of the Comintern, if it continues to adhere to its errors. But the fate of one small faction must in no case be identified with the fate of the American Communist Party. Because one small factional group is liable to perish politically, it does not follow, that the American Communist Party must perish. And, if it is inevitable that this small factional group perish, then let it perish, as long as the Communist Party will grow and develop. You look at the situation too pessimistically, dear comrades of the American delegation. My outlook is optimistic.

in the individual Parties, nor in the Comintern, if individuals, and minorities in general, did not submit to the will of the majority, to the will of the higher collective? That is how it works out, comrades of the American delegation.

Finally, a few words as to the fate of the American Communist Party in connection with the decision adopted by the Presidium of the ECCI. The comrades of the American delegation regard the matter too tragically. They declare that with the adoption of the draft of the Commission the American Communist Party will either perish, or in any case, will totter on the brink of a precipice. That is not so, comrades. More than that, it is absolutely ludicrous. The American Communist Party lives and will continue to live, in spite of the prophecies of the comrades of the American delegation. What is more, the American Party, if it drives unprincipled factionalism out of its midst, will grow and flourish. The importance of the decision adopted by the Presidium consists in the very fact that it will make it easier for the American Communist Party to put an end to unprincipled factionalism, create unity in the Party, and finally enter on the broad path of mass political work.

No, comrades, the American Communist Party will not perish. It will live and flourish to the dismay of the enemies of the working class. Only one small

majority and the minority group. It would be wrong to ignore the specific peculiarities of American capitalism. The Communist Party in its work must take them into account. But it would be still more wrong to base the activities of the Communist Party on these specific features, since the foundation of the activities of every Communist Party, including the American Communist Party, on which it must base itself, must be the general features of capitalism, which are the same for all countries, and not its specific features in any given country.

It is on this that the internationalism of the Communist Party is founded. Specific features are only supplementary to the general features. The error of both groups is that they exaggerate the significance of the specific features of American capitalism and thereby overlook the basic features of American capitalism which are characteristic of world capitalism as a whole. Therefore, when the leaders of the majority and the minority accuse each other of elements of a right deviation, it is obviously not without some measure of truth.

It cannot be denied that American conditions form a medium in which it is easy for the American Communist Party to be led astray and to exaggerate the strength and stability of American capitalism. These conditions lead our comrades from America,

both the majority and the minority, into errors of the type of the right deviation. Owing to these conditions, at times one section, at others, the other section, fails to realize the full extent of reformism in America, underestimates the leftward swing of the working class, and, in general, is inclined to regard American capitalism as something apart from and above world capitalism. That is the basis for the unsteadiness of both sections of the American Communist Party in matters of principle.

Having made these general observations, let us now pass to practical political questions. What are the main defects in the practice of the leaders of the majority and the minority? Firstly, that in their day-to-day work they, and particularly the leaders of the majority, are guided by motives of unprincipled factionalism and place the interests of their faction higher than the interests of the Party. Secondly, that both groups, and particularly the majority, are so infected with the disease of factionalism that they base their relations with the Comintern, not on the principle of confidence, but on a policy of rotten diplomacy, a policy of diplomatic intrigue.

Let us take a few examples. I will mention such a simple fact as the speculations made by the leaders both of the majority and the minority regarding the differences within the Communist Party of the Soviet

against the declaration of the American delegation and in favor of the draft of the Commission? Members of the American delegation, do you think that the conscience and convictions of Comrade Gitlow are above the conscience and convictions of the overwhelming majority of the Presidium of the ECCI? Do you begin to understand that if each of us starts to act according to his own will without reckoning with the will of the collective, we shall never come to any decision; we shall never have any collective will, nor any leadership? Let us take any factory or plant.

Let us assume that the majority of the workers of that factory show an inclination to go on strike, whereas the minority, on the plea of their convictions, declare against a strike. A war of opinions commences, meetings are held, and in the end the vast majority in the factory decide to strike. What would you say of 10 or 20 workers, representing a minority in the factory, who declared they would not submit to the decision of the majority of the workers, since they were not in agreement with that decision? What would you call them, dear comrades? You know that such workers are usually called strikebreakers. Is it not clear that strikes, demonstrations, and other collective actions of the workers would be absolutely impossible if the minority did not subordinate itself to the majority? Is it not clear that we should never have had any decisions or any collective will, neither

there can be no collective, no collective leadership, no Communism. And that is true not only in respect to individual Parties and their Central Committees; it is particularly true in respect to the Comintern and its leading organs, which unite all Parties of Communists throughout the world.

Comrades Gitlow and Lovestone announced here with aplomb that their conscience and convictions do not permit them to submit to the decisions of the Presidium and carry them into effect. The same was said by Comrade Bloor. What they said amounted to this, that since they do not agree with the decision of the Presidium, they cannot submit to that decision and carry it into effect. But only anarchists and individualists can talk like that, not Bolsheviks, not Leninists, who are obliged to place the will of the collective above their individual will. They talk of their conscience. But the members of the Presidium of the ECCI also have their conscience and convictions.

What is to be done if the conscience and convictions of the Presidium of the ECCI conflict with the conscience and convictions of individual members of the American delegation? What is to be done if the American delegation in the Presidium received only one vote for their declaration, the vote of Comrade Gitlow, while the remaining members of the Presidium unanimously declared themselves

Union. You know that both groups of the American Communist Party, competing with each other and chasing after each other like horses in a race, are feverishly speculating on existing and non-existing differences within the CPSU. Why do they do that? Do the interests of the Communist Party of America demand it? No, of course not. They do it in order to gain some advantage for their own particular faction and to cause injury to the other faction.

Foster and Bittleman see nothing reprehensible in declaring themselves “Stalinites” and thereby demonstrating their loyalty to the CPSU. But, my dear comrades, that is disgraceful. Do you not know that there are no “Stalinites,” that there must be no “Stalinites”? Why does the minority act in this unseemly fashion? In order to entrap the majority group, the group of Comrade Lovestone, and to prove that the Lovestone group is opposed to the CPSU and, hence, to the basic nucleus in the Comintern. That is, of course, incorrect. It is irresponsible. But the minority cares nothing about that; their chief aim is to ensnare and discredit the majority in the interests of the faction of the minority.

And how does the Lovestone group act in this connection? Does it behave more correctly than the minority group? Unfortunately not. Unfortunately, its behavior is even more disgraceful than that

of the minority group. Judge for yourselves. The Foster group demonstrate their closeness to the CPSU by declaring themselves “Stalinites.” Lovestone perceives that his own faction thereby may lose something by this. Therefore, in order not to be outdone, the Lovestone group suddenly performs a “hair raising” feat and, at the American Party Congress, carries through a decision calling for the removal of Comrade Bukharin from the Comintern. And so you get a game of rivalry on the principle of who will outdo whom. Instead of a fight on principles you get the most unprincipled speculation on the differences within the CPSU. Such are the results of a policy which places the interests of faction higher than the interests of the Party.

Another example. I refer to the case of Comrade Pepper. You are all more or less acquainted with that case. Twice the Comintern demanded Comrade Pepper’s return to Moscow. The Central Committee of the American Communist Party resisted and, in fact, ignored a number of decisions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International regarding Pepper. Thereby the majority of the American Communist Party demonstrated its fellowship with Pepper, whose opportunist vacillations everybody knows.

hundreds of instances in the history of our Party when a section of Bolsheviks, convinced that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party had taken a wrong decision, nevertheless, after discussion, after hot dispute, after defending their conviction, would declare their complete readiness to conform to the decisions of the higher leading collective and carry them into effect.

I might mention such an instance which took place in 1907 when a section of the Bolsheviks were in favor of boycotting the Duma, whereas the larger section of Bolsheviks were for a change in policy in favor of participating in the Duma, and the minority unreservedly submitted to the will of the majority. The Russian Bolsheviks would have ruined the cause of the Russian Revolution had they not known how to conform the will of individual comrades to the will of the majority, had they not known how to act collectively. That is how we Bolsheviks were trained, the Bolsheviks who overthrew the bourgeoisie, established the Soviet Power, and who are now shaking the foundations of world imperialism. Ability to act collectively, readiness to conform the will of individual comrades to the will of the collective, that is what we call true Bolshevik manhood. For without that manhood, without the ability to overcome, if you like, one’s self-esteem, and subordinate one’s will to the will of the collective, without these qualities,

one. But now that the draft of the Commission has become the decision of the Presidium, the American delegates should have the manhood to submit to the will of the collective, the will of the Comintern, and assume responsibility for carrying into effect the decision of the Comintern. We ought to value the firmness and stubbornness displayed here by eight of the ten American delegates in their fight against the draft of the Commission. But it is impossible to approve the fact that these eight comrades, after their views have suffered complete defeat, refuse to subordinate their will to the will of the higher collective, the will of the Presidium of the ECCI. True Bolshevik courage does not consist in placing one's individual will above the will of the collective, above the will of the Comintern. True courage consists in being strong enough to master and overcome one's self and subordinate one's will to the will of the collective, the will of the higher Party body. Without that there is no collective. Without that there is not, and cannot be, any collective leadership.

I think you will not deny the Russian Bolsheviks' courage, firmness, and ability to defend their convictions. How did any group of Russian Bolsheviks usually act when they found themselves in a minority? Not wishing to break the iron discipline of the Party, the minority as a rule conformed to the will of the majority. There have been tens and

Finally, a delegation from the Executive Committee of the Communist International sent to the 6th Congress of the American Communist Party, advances again, in the name of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the immediate recall of Comrade Pepper. The majority under the leadership of Lovestone and Gitlow again resists this demand and does not find it necessary to carry out the decision of the E.C.C.I. Foster's group utilizes this situation against the Lovestone group, stating that the majority group within the American Communist Party is against the Comintern.

The Lovestone group finally senses that its interests might suffer should it find itself in a position of opposition to the Comintern. Accordingly, the Lovestone group performs another "hair-raising" feat and expels Comrade Pepper from the Party, the same Pepper whom only the day before they had defended against the Communist International! Another game of rivalry – who can spit furthest. How can we explain the resistance to the decisions of the Comintern regarding Pepper on the part of the majority group? Not, of course, in the interests of the Party. It was exclusively in the interests of the majority faction. Why is it that the majority made a sudden right-about-face and unexpectedly expelled Pepper from the Party? Was it in the interests of the Party? Of course not. It was purely in the interests of the

Lovestone faction, who were anxious not to surrender a trump card to their enemy, namely, the Foster-Bittleman factional group. Faction interests above all!

The Foster group want to demonstrate their devotion to the CPSU by declaring themselves “Stalinites”. Very good. We, the Lovestoneites, will go still further than the Foster group and demand the removal of Comrade Bukharin from the Comintern. Let the Fosterites try to beat that! Let them know over there in Moscow that we Americans know how to play the stock market.

The Foster group want to demonstrate their solidarity with the Comintern by demanding the carrying out of the decision of the Comintern regarding Pepper’s recall. Very good. We, the Lovestoneites, will go still further and will expel Comrade Pepper from the Party. Let the Fosterites try to beat that! Let them know over there in Moscow that we Americans know how to play the stock market.

There you have the fruits of the factionalism of the majority and the minority. But, comrades, the Comintern is not a stock market. The Comintern is the holy of holies of the working class. The Comintern, therefore, must not be confused with a stock market. Either we are Leninists, and our relations with one another, as well as the relations of

talk nonsense regarding the disintegration of the Comintern, just because they are philistines.

Revolutionaries, on the other hand, will always welcome this beneficent process, because it is at the same time an integral part of the great cause of preparing the working class for the approaching class struggles, which is now the main task of the Communist Parties of the world. The merit of the draft of the Commission, consists in the fact, among others, that it assists the Communist Party of America in carrying this main task into effect.

III. Second Speech Delivered at the Presidium of the ECCI on the American Question, May 14, 1929

It seems to me, comrades, that certain American comrades fail to understand the position that has been created now that the draft of the Commission has been adopted by the Presidium. Apparently comrades do not fully realize that to defend one’s convictions when the decision had not yet been taken is one thing, and to submit to the will of the Comintern after the decision has been taken is an other.

One might, and one ought to have, criticized and fought against the draft of the Commission if the members of the delegation considered it was a wrong

before the face of the storm and will not fall into panic, but will sail into the face of the storm.

But in order to carry out this task, it is necessary at once, without the loss of a single moment, for time does not wait, to set about cleaning the Communist Parties of Right and conciliatory elements, who objectively represent the agency of Social-Democracy within the ranks of the Communist Party. And we must set about this matter, not at the usual pace, but at an accelerated pace, for, I repeat, time does not wait, and we must not allow events to catch us unawares. A couple of years ago we might not have been so urgent about this matter, counting on the fact that the molecular process of Bolshevization of the Parties would gradually eliminate the Right and the wavering elements, all the Brandlers and Thalheimers, all and every factional wire-puller, etc., etc. We might not have been so urgent because there was no danger of being belated.

But matters stand differently now. To delay now means to be late, and to be late means to be caught unawares by the revolutionary crisis. Therefore, the cleansing process of the Communist Parties now proceeding is a beneficent process, strengthening the Comintern and its sections. The philistines are afraid of this beneficent process, and in their fright

the sections with the Comintern, and vice-versa, must be built on mutual confidence, must be as clean and pure as crystal – in which case there should be no room in our ranks for rotten diplomatic intrigue; or we are not Leninists – in which case rotten diplomacy and unprincipled factional struggle will have full scope in our relations. One or the other. We must choose, comrades.

In order to show how pure Communist morals are depraved and defiled in the course of a factional struggle, I could cite yet another fact as, for instance, my conversation with Comrades Foster and Lovestone. I refer to the conversation that took place at the time of the Sixth Congress. It is characteristic that in correspondence with his friends Comrade Foster makes this conversation out to be something secret, something which must not be talked about aloud. It is characteristic that Comrade Lovestone, in bringing his charges against Comrade Foster, in connection with this conversation, refers to his talk with me and boasts here that he, Comrade Lovestone, unlike Foster, is able to keep a secret and that under no conditions would he consent to divulge the substance of his conversation with me.

Why this mysticism, dear comrades; what purpose does it serve? What could there be mysterious in my talk with Comrades Foster and Lovestone? Listening

to these comrades, one might think I spoke to them of things which one would be ashamed to relate here. But that is stupid, comrades. What is the purpose of this mystical game? Is it difficult to understand that I have nothing to conceal from comrades? Is it difficult to understand that I am ready at any moment to tell comrades the substance of my conversation with Foster and Lovestone from beginning to end? What will then become of the famous mysticism so zealously spread here by Foster and Lovestone?

What did Comrade Foster talk to me about? He complained of the factionalism and unprincipledness of Comrade Lovestone's group. What did I answer him? I admitted these sins on the part of the Lovestone group, but at the same time added that the same sins were characteristic of the Foster group. On the basis of this Comrade Foster arrives at the singular conclusion that I sympathize with the minority group. Where is the foundation, one asks? On what grounds is Foster pleased to think that I fail to see the defects of the minority group and even sympathize with that group? Is it not obvious that with Comrade Foster *the wish is father to the thought*? What did Comrade Lovestone talk about? Of the worthlessness of the Foster-Bittleman group. What did I answer? I answered that both groups were suffering from serious defects and advised him to take measures to liquidate factionalism. That was all.

brother Parties without which the proletariat cannot be prepared for the imminent class conflicts.

There are many who think that nothing has changed in the international situation of late, that everything has remained as of old. This is not true, comrades. The fact of the matter is that we have an accentuation of the class struggle in all capitalist countries, a growing revolutionary crisis in Europe, growing conditions of a new revolutionary upward swing. Yesterday this was signaled by a general strike in Lodz. Not so long ago we had a signal from Berlin. Tomorrow we shall get signals from France, England, Czechoslovakia, America, India, China. Soon the ground will be too hot for world capitalism.

The duty of the Communist Party is at once to begin preparatory work for the coming class struggles, to prepare the working class and the exploited masses for new revolutionary struggles. The fight against reformism, against Social-Democracy must be intensified. The struggle for the winning of the millions of the working masses to the side of Communism must be intensified. The fight must be intensified for the forging of real revolutionary Party cadres and for the selection of real revolutionary leaders of the Party, of individuals capable of entering the fight and bringing the proletariat with them, individuals who will not run

a crisis and of demoralization in the Communist International. Speaking of demoralization of the Comintern, the right-wingers usually refer to such facts as the expulsion of right-wingers from the German Communist Party, the debacle of the right-wingers in the Czechoslovakian Party, the isolation of the right-wingers in the French Communist Party, the fight for the isolation of the incorrigible factionalists in the American Communist Party, and so forth and so on.

Well, perhaps these facts are really symptoms of grave illness of the Communist International, symptoms of its demoralization, symptoms of a “running sore” in the Communist International? Of course not, comrades. Only philistines and Babbitts in the Party can think that. The fact of the matter is that this is a beneficent process of cleansing the sections of the Communist International of opportunist and wavering elements. The Parties are being Bolshevized and strengthened by ridding themselves of decay. That this is the meaning of the recent events in the German, Czechoslovakian, American, French, and other Parties is clear. To the philistines in the Party all this appears to be a sign of demoralization of the Comintern because they can not see further than their nose. But revolutionary Marxists know that this is a beneficent process of Bolshevization of our

What is there mysterious here that cannot be spoken about aloud? Is it not strange that out of these simple and clear facts the comrades of the majority and the minority make a secret worthy of arousing the laughter of serious-minded people? Is it not obvious that there would be no mystification if there were no factional atmosphere poisoning the life of the American Communist Party and defiling simple and pure Communist morals?

Or let us take, for instance, another fact. I refer to the talk with Comrade Lovestone that took place the other day. It is characteristic that Comrade Lovestone has also been spreading absurd rumors about this conversation of mine and making a secret of it. Why this incomprehensible passion for the “mysterious”? What did he speak about to me the other day?

He asked that the Presidium of the ECCI should rescind the decision to withdraw him from America. He said that he, Lovestone, would undertake to carry out the proposed decision of the Presidium of the ECCI, provided it would not be directed sharply against the leaders of the majority of the Communist Party of America. He promised to be a loyal soldier of the Comintern and to prove it in practice, if the Comintern would give him the necessary instructions. He said he was not looking for high positions in the American Communist Party,

but only begged that he should be tested and given the opportunity to prove his loyalty to the Comintern. What did I reply to this? I told him that experiments in testing the loyalty of Comrade Lovestone to the Comintern have already been going on for three years, but no good has come of them. I said it would be better both for the Communist Party of America and for the Comintern, if Comrades Lovestone and Bittleman were kept in Moscow for a time. I said that this method of action on the part of the Comintern was one of the surest means of curing the American Communist Party of factionalism and saving it from disintegration. I said that although this was my opinion, I agreed to submit the proposal of Comrade Lovestone to the consideration of the Russian comrades, and undertook to inform him of the opinion of the Russian comrades.

That seems perfectly clear. Yet Comrade Lovestone again tries to make a secret of these obvious facts and is spreading all kinds of rumors regarding this conversation. It is obvious that there would be no such mystification, and simple things would not be turned into mysterious legends, if it were not for a policy which places the interests of a faction higher than the interests of the Party, the interests of diplomatic intrigue higher than the interests of the Comintern.

are proceeding at the present time. In conversation with me the other day, Comrade Lovestone declared that some phrase or other regarding a “running sore” in the apparatus of the Comintern, was a slip of the tongue. He assured me that the phrase was a chance one and had no connection with his relations to the Comintern. I answered that if the phrase were indeed an accidental one, it was not worth paying any attention to, although the phrase itself was undoubtedly untrue and mistaken.

However, some time later I acquainted myself with the report made by Comrade Lovestone at the Sixth Congress, where he again speaks of a “running sore,” but this time not in relation to the apparatus of the Comintern, but to world capitalism. Apparently, the phrase “running sore” is not altogether a chance one with Comrade Lovestone. “Running sore” in relation to world capitalism implies, we must assume, the crisis of world capitalism, the process of its disintegration. And what does Comrade Lovestone mean by the “running sore” in the apparatus of the Communist International? Apparently the same crisis and demoralization of the Comintern apparatus. What else could that expression mean? What is it that makes Lovestone speak of a “running sore” or of a crisis in the Comintern apparatus? Obviously the same thing that prompts the right-wingers in the ranks of the CPSU to speak of

is one thing, a factional leader is something quite different. Not every factional leader has the gift of being a Party leader. I doubt very much that at this stage Comrade Lovestone can be a Party leader. That is how matters stand, comrades.

And what is the solution, you will ask? In my opinion the solution is to accept the draft of the Commission, to reject the declaration of the American delegation and to lay on all members of the Communist Party of America the duty of unreservedly carrying out the decisions of the Presidium. Either the American comrades will unhesitatingly submit to the decisions of the ECCI and actively carry them into effect – and that will be an important step toward destroying factionalism, toward peace in the Party; or they will stick to their declaration and refuse to submit to the decisions of the ECCI – and that will mean no peace, but war against the Comintern, war within the ranks of the American Communist Party. We propose peace and unity. If the comrades of the American delegation adopt our proposals, well and good; if not, all the worse for them. The Comintern will take its due course under all circumstances. Of that you may be sure, dear comrades.

Finally, a word or two regarding the new processes of Bolshevizing the sections of the Comintern which

In order to put an end to these foul methods and place the American Communist Party on the lines of Leninist policy, it is necessary first of all to put an end to factionalism in that Party. That is the conclusion to which the above-mentioned facts bring us. What is the solution?

Comrade Foster mentioned one. According to his proposal, the leadership should be handed over to the minority. Can that solution be adopted? No, it can not. The delegation of the Executive Committee of the Communist International committed an error when it sharply dissociated itself from the majority, without at the same time dissociating itself equally sharply from the minority. It would be very unfortunate if the Commission of the Presidium repeated the error of the delegation of the ECCI. I think the Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI should in its draft dissociate itself both from the errors of the majority and from the errors of the minority. And for the very reason that it must dissociate itself from both, it must not propose to turn over the leadership to the minority. Hence the proposal of Comrade Foster with all its implications, automatically falls to the ground.

The American delegation proposed a different solution, directly contrary to the proposal of Comrade Foster. As you know, the proposal of the American delegation consists of 10 points. The substance of this

proposal is to the effect that the leadership of the majority should be fully rehabilitated, the factional work of the majority should be considered correct, that the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI to withdraw Comrade Lovestone should be annulled, and that thus the practice of suffocating the minority should be endorsed. Can this solution be adopted? No, it can not, for it would mean, not eradicating factionalism, but elevating it to a principle. What then is the solution? The solution consists in the following:

1. The actions and the proposals of the delegation of the ECCI must, in the main, be approved, with the exclusion from the proposals of those points which approximate to the proposals of Comrade Foster.
2. An open letter must be sent in the name of the ECCI to the members of the American Communist Party setting forth the errors of both sections of the Party and sharply emphasizing the question of eradicating all factionalism.
3. The action of the leaders of the majority at the Convention of the Communist Party of America, particularly on the question of Pepper, must be condemned.
4. An end must be put to the present situation in the Communist Party of America, in which the questions of positive work, the questions of

At present you still have a formal majority. But tomorrow you will have no majority and you will find yourselves completely isolated if you attempt to start a fight against the decisions of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. You may be certain of that dear comrades.

Comrade Lovestone is spoken of as a talented leader, as the founder of the American Communist Party. It is said that the Communist Party of America cannot get along without Comrade Lovestone, that the removal of Comrade Lovestone may ruin the Party. That is not true, comrades. More than that, it is not sincere. It would be a bad Party that could not get along without any given leader. The Communist Party of America is not as weak as certain comrades think. It is, in any case, many times stronger than it is made out to be. The Party is created by the working class and not by individual leaders. To declare the contrary would be absurd.

And, what is more, Comrade Lovestone after all is not such a great leader. He is, of course, a capable and talented comrade. But how have his capabilities been employed? In factional scandal-mongering, in factional intrigue. Comrade Lovestone is indisputably an adroit and talented factional wire-puller. No one can deny him that. But factional leadership must not be confused with Party leadership. A Party leader

ranks of the CPSU. You know, comrades, in what a farce the vainglory of Trotsky and Zinoviev ended. I would therefore advise you not to play trumps with percentages.

You declare you have a certain majority in the American Communist Party and that you will retain that majority under all circumstances. That is untrue, comrades of the American delegation, absolutely untrue. You had a majority because the American Communist Party until now regarded you as the determined supporters of the Communist International. And it was only because the Party regarded you as the friends of the Comintern that you had a majority in the ranks of the American Communist Party. But what will happen if the American workers learn that you intend to break the unity of the ranks of the Comintern and are thinking of conducting a fight against its executive bodies – that is the question, dear comrades? Do you think that the American workers will follow your lead against the Comintern, that they will prefer the interests of your factional group to the interests of the Comintern? There have been numerous cases in the history of the Comintern when its most popular leaders, who had greater authority than you, found themselves isolated as soon as they raised the banner against the Comintern. Do you think you will fare better than these leaders? A poor hope, comrades!

the struggle of the working class against the capitalists, questions of wages, working hours, work in the trade unions, the fight against reformism, the fight against the right deviation – when all these questions are kept in the shade, and are replaced by petty questions of the factional struggle between the Lovestone group and the Foster group.

5. The Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the American Communist Party must be reorganized with the inclusion of such workers therein as are capable of seeing something more than the factional struggle, the struggle of the working class against the capitalists, who are capable of placing the interests and the unity of the Party above the interests of individual groups and their leaders.
6. Comrades Lovestone and Bittleman must be summoned and placed at the disposal of the Comintern, in order that the members of the American Communist Party should at last understand that the Comintern intends to fight factionalism in all seriousness.

Such is the solution, in my opinion.

A word or two regarding the tasks and the mission of the American Communist Party. I think, comrades, that the American Communist Party is one

of those few Communist Parties in the world upon which history has laid tasks of a decisive character from the point of view of the world revolutionary movement. You all know very well the strength and power of American capitalism. Many now think that the general crisis of world capitalism will not affect America. That, of course, is not true. It is entirely untrue, comrades. The crisis of world capitalism is developing with increasing rapidity and cannot but affect American capitalism. The three million now unemployed in America are the first swallows indicating the ripening of the economic crisis in America. The sharpening antagonism between America and England, the struggle for markets and raw materials and, finally, the colossal growth of armaments – that is the second portent of the approaching crisis.

I think the moment is not far off when a revolutionary crisis will develop in America. And when a revolutionary crisis develops in America, that will be the beginning of the end of world capitalism as a whole. It is essential that the American Communist Party should be capable of meeting that historical moment fully prepared and of assuming the leadership of the impending class struggle in America. Every effort and every means must be employed in preparing for that, comrades.

trying to dig up something in the personal life of the factional enemy, or, if nothing can be found, inventing some fiction about him. It is obvious that positive work must suffer in such an atmosphere, the life of the Party becomes petty, the authority of the Party declines and the workers, the best, the revolutionary-minded workers, who want action and not scandal-mongering, are forced to leave the Party.

That, fundamentally, is the evil of factionalism in the ranks of a Communist Party. Hence, the most important task of the American Communist Party is to put an end to factionalism and definitely cure itself of this disease. It is on this that the draft of the Commission presented for your consideration is based.

A few words regarding the vaunting manner in which the group of Comrade Lovestone speaks and represents itself here in the name of the whole Party, in the name of 99% of the Communist Party of America. They never represent themselves otherwise than in the name of 99% of the Party. One would think they have that 99% in their pockets. That is a bad manner, comrades of the American delegation. Let me remind you that Zinoviev and Trotsky also at one time played trumps with percentages, and assured everybody that they had secured, or at any rate, would secure, a 99% majority in the

Party against the interests of the Party. True, such a regime threatens the complete demoralization of the ranks of the Party. But the factionalists do not care about that, since for them, the interests of their group are supreme.

Finally, the evil of factionalism consists in the fact that it completely nullifies all positive work done in the Party; it robs the Party workers of all desire to concern themselves with the day-to-day needs of the working class (wages, hours, the improvement of the material welfare of the workers, etc.); it weakens the work of the Party in preparing the working class for the class conflicts with the bourgeoisie and thereby creates a state of affairs in which the authority of the Party must inevitably suffer in the eyes of the workers, and the workers, instead of flocking to the Party, are compelled to quit the Party ranks.

And that is what we are now observing in the American Communist Party. What have the factional leaders of the majority and the minority been chiefly occupied with lately? With factional scandal-mongering, with every kind of petty factional trifle, the drawing up of useless platforms and sub-platforms, the introduction of tens and hundreds of amendments and sub-amendments to these platforms. Weeks and months are wasted lying in ambush for the factional enemy, trying to entrap him,

For that end the American Communist Party must be improved and Bolshevized. For that end we must work for the complete liquidation of factionalism and deviations in the Party. For that end we must work for the reestablishment of unity in the Communist Party of America. For that end we must work in order to forge real revolutionary cadres and a real revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, capable of leading the many millions of the American working class toward the revolutionary class struggles. For that end all personal factors and factional considerations must be laid aside and the revolutionary education of the working class of America must be placed above all.

That is why I think, comrades, that the most serious attention must be paid to the proposals of the Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI for your consideration here, for the aim of these proposals is to render the Communist Party of America a healthy Party, to eradicate factionalism, to create unity, to strengthen the Party and to Bolshevize it.

II. First Speech Delivered to the Presidium of the ECCI on the American Question, May 14th, 1929

Comrades, we are faced with a unique fact, worthy of the most serious attention. A month has already passed since the American delegation arrived in Moscow. For almost a whole month we are occupied with it, we are discussing the problems of the American Communist Party and are indicating methods of clearing up the situation that has arisen. Every member of the delegation has had the opportunity to exercise his right of expressing his views and criticizing the comrades who were not in agreement with him. You know that this right was exercised by them to the full, without the slightest hindrance on the part of the ECCI. You know that Comrade Lovestone insisted that the Russian comrades should express their views. You know that the Russian comrades have already had their say on the essential aspects of the question. Accordingly, the Commission has fulfilled all the conditions requisite for finding a solution and bringing the matter to a conclusion.

And what do we find? Instead of a serious attitude to the matter at hand, and a readiness to put an

Thirdly, in that factionalism, by weakening the will for unity in the Party and by undermining its iron discipline, creates within the Party a peculiar factional regime, as a result of which the whole internal life of our Party is robbed of its clandestine protection in the face of the class enemy, and the Party itself runs the danger of being transformed into a plaything of the agents of the bourgeoisie. This, as a rule, comes about in the following way: Let us say that some question is being decided in the Politburo of the Central Committee. Within the Politburo there is a minority and a majority which regard each decision from their factional standpoint. If a factional regime prevails in the Party, the wire-pullers of both factions immediately inform the peripheral machine of this or that decision of the Politburo, endeavoring to prepare it for their own advantage and swing it in the direction they desire. As a rule, this process of information becomes a regular system.

It becomes a regular system because each faction regards it as its duty to inform its peripheral machine in the way it thinks fit and to hold its periphery in a condition of mobilization in readiness for a scrap with the factional enemy. As a result, important secret decisions of the Party become general knowledge. In this way the agents of the bourgeoisie attain access to the secret decisions of the Party and make it easy to use the knowledge of the internal life of the

inclined to forget the interests of the Party – all they can think of is their own factional point of view.

Secondly, in that factionalism interferes with the training of the Party in the spirit of a policy of principles; it prevents the training of the cadres in an honest, proletarian, incorruptible revolutionary spirit, free from rotten diplomacy and unprincipled intrigue. Leninism declares that a policy based on principles is the only correct policy. Factionalism, on the contrary, believes that the only correct policy is one of factional diplomacy and unprincipled factional intrigue. That is why an atmosphere of factional struggle cultivates not politicians of principle, but adroit factionalist manipulators, experienced rascals and Mensheviks, smart in fooling the “enemy” and covering up traces. It is true that such “educational” work of the factionalists is contrary to the fundamental interests of the Party and the working class. But the factionalists do not give a rap for that – all they care about is their own factional diplomatic kitchen, their own group interests. It is therefore not surprising that politicians of principle and honest proletarian revolutionaries get no sympathy from the factionalists. On the other hand, factional tricksters and manipulators, unprincipled intriguers and backstage wire-pullers, and masters in the formation of unprincipled blocks are held by them in high honor.

end finally to factionalism, we have a fresh outburst of factionalism among the members of the American delegation and a fresh attempt to undermine the cause of unity of the American Communist Party. A few days ago we were still without the draft of the decision of the Comintern on the American question. All we had then was an outline of the general principles for a decision, an outline directed toward the eradication of factionalism. But instead of waiting until the draft decision appeared, the American delegation, without wasting words, broke out with the declaration of May 9th, a declaration of a super-factional character, an anti-Party declaration.

You know with what hostility the members of the Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI met this declaration. You know that the Commission criticized it to shreds. One might have expected that the American delegation would give thought to this and correct its errors. The direct contrary, in fact, occurred. The draft of the proposals of the Commission, which has now been distributed to all the members of the Presidium of the ECCI and the American delegation, no sooner appeared than the American delegation broke out with the new declaration of May 14th, a declaration still more factional and anti-Party than that of May 9th. You are, of course, acquainted with this declaration. Comrade Gitlow read it here during the course of his

speech. The fundamental feature of this declaration is that it proclaims the thesis of non-submission to the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI. That means that the extreme factionalism of the leaders of the majority has driven them into the path of insubordination, and hence of warfare against the Comintern.

It cannot be denied that our American comrades, like all Communists, have the right to disagree with the draft of the decision of the Commission and have the right to oppose it. And as long as they confine themselves to the exercise of this right there is not, and cannot be anything wrong. But the trouble is that the declaration of May 14th does not stop there. It goes further; it considers that the fight must be continued even after the draft becomes the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI.

Therefore, we must put the question squarely to the members of the American delegation: When the draft assumes the force of an obligatory decision of the Comintern, do they consider themselves entitled not to submit to that decision? We have argued the question in the Commission for a whole month; we have had a number of discussions; we have spent a tremendous amount of time on the matter, time that might have been more profitably employed; we finally arrived at the point when the time

from the point of view of the narrow interests of their own faction, from the point of view of their own factional kitchen.

Did not Comrade Lovestone and his friends know that they should have held aloof from Pepper, and that they should have repudiated him so as not to compromise themselves as revolutionaries? Why, in spite of several warnings given by the Comintern, did they not repudiate him at the time? Because they acted first and foremost as factionalists. Because every bit of splinter, every piece of string is to be valued in a factional fight, even every poor soldier, even every poor officer. Because even people like Pepper may serve a purpose in a factional fight. Because factional blindness compelled them to place the interests of their faction above the interests of the Party. Did not Comrade Foster know that he should have held aloof from the concealed Trotskyites that were in his group? Why, in spite of repeated warnings, did he not repudiate them at the time? Because he behaved first and foremost as a factionalist. Because in the factional fight against the Lovestone group even concealed Trotskyites might be useful to him. Because the blindness of factionalism dulls the Party sense in people and makes them indiscriminating as to the means they employ. It is true, such a policy is bad and irreconcilable with the interests of the Party. But factionalists as a rule are

obliged to organize a faction in order to break down the authority of the Social-Democrats, to organize a split against Social-Democracy and to create our own Communist Party. At that time factionalism was useful and essential. But now? Now it is a different matter. Conditions have changed, basically. At present we have our own monolithic Communist Parties, sections of the Communist International. Now factionalism is dangerous and harmful, because it weakens Communism, weakens the Communist offensive against reformism, undermines the struggle of Communism against Social-Democracy in the labor movement. Our American comrades evidently do not understand the fundamental difference between the past and the present.

Wherein consists the evil of factionalism within the ranks of a Communist Party? Firstly, in that factionalism weakens the Party spirit, it dulls the revolutionary sense and blinds the Party workers to such an extent that, in the factional passion, they are obliged to place the interests of their faction above the interests of the Party, above the interests of the Comintern, above the interests of the working class. Factionalism not infrequently brings matters to such a pass that the Party workers, blinded by the factional struggle, are inclined to gauge all facts, all events in the life of the Party, not from the point of view of the interests of the Party and the working class, but

for discussion was over and were on the eve of adopting a decision which must be compulsory for all members of the Comintern. And now the question arises: do the members of the American delegation, as Communists, as Leninists, consider themselves entitled not to submit to the decision of the ECCI on the American question? That is the crux of the matter, comrades.

Permit me now to proceed to examine the declaration itself. This declaration of May 14th was drawn up rather craftily. I do not doubt that this declaration was written by some sly attorney, by some petty-fogging lawyer. Judge for yourselves. On the one hand, the declaration avows complete loyalty to the Comintern, the unshakeable fidelity of the authors of the declaration to the Communist International, not only in the past, not only in the present, but also in the future. That, of course, is excellent, provided it is not an empty promise. On the other hand, the declaration states that its authors cannot assume responsibility for carrying out the decision of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. It plainly states:

There are valid reasons for our being unable to accept this new draft letter, to assume responsibility before the Party membership

for the execution of this letter, to endorse the inevitable irreparable damage that the line of this new draft letter is bound to bring to our Party.

If you please, on the one hand, complete loyalty; on the other, a refusal to carry out the decision of the Comintern. And this is called loyalty to the Comintern! Petti-fogging practice, indeed. Can you picture a Communist, not a paper Communist, but a real Communist, avowing loyalty to the Comintern and at the same time refusing to accept responsibility for carrying out the decisions of the Comintern? What sort of loyalty is that? What is the reason for this duplicity? This hypocrisy? Is it not obvious that this weighty talk of loyalty and fidelity to the Comintern is necessary to Comrade Lovestone in order to deceive the “membership”?

One involuntarily recalls the unforgettable Mr. Chamberlain, who, on the one hand, is for peace and reduction of armaments and, on the other, does everything possible to insure that armaments should increase and preparations for war proceed at full speed. The chatter about peace is necessary to Chamberlain in order to cover up the preparations for a new war. Loud talks about loyalty and fidelity to the Comintern is necessary to Comrade Lovestone in order to cover up preparations for the fight

Such is the true character of the declaration of the American delegation. Hence, the declaration of the American delegation is a platform of struggle against the line of the Comintern in the name of opportunist vacillation, in the name of unprincipled factionalism, in the name of the violation of the unity of the American Communist Party.

Let us turn to the draft of the Commission. What is the basis for the draft of the Commission which is now offered for the consideration of the Presidium of the ECCI? It is based on the idea of maintaining the line of the Comintern within the ranks of the Communist Party of America, on the idea of Bolshevizing the American Communist Party, on the idea of fighting the deviation from the Marxist line, and, above all, the right deviation, on the idea of Leninist Party unity, and finally, and above all, on the idea of completely liquidating factionalism. For it must after all be realized, comrades, that factionalism is the fundamental evil of the American Communist Party.

In the history of the revolutionary movement of the working class we Bolsheviks have not infrequently had occasion to conduct a factional fight against opportunism. It was at the time when the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks found themselves in one common Party, when the Bolsheviks were

When Zinoviev moved away from the Comintern he began by counterposing the line of the Comintern to the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. He did that in order to conceal his fight against the Executive Committee by talk regarding the line of the Comintern. The same is true of Trotsky, who began his divergence from the Comintern by drawing a distinction between the line of the Comintern and the decisions of the Executive Committee and the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. That is the old, outworn path of opportunism, as old as the world itself. It is regrettable that the authors of the declaration have been drawn into this same path.

In counterposing the Comintern to the Executive Committee of the Comintern, the authors of the declaration hope, as Zinoviev and Trotsky once hoped, to sever the Executive Committee of the Comintern from the Comintern. A ridiculous and foolish hope! The authors of the declaration apparently forget that the interpreters of the decisions of the Comintern Congresses are the Executive Committee and its Presidium alone, and not they. The authors of the declaration are mistaken if they think that the American workers will believe their interpretation rather than the interpretation of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

against the decisions of the Comintern. Comrade Lovestone, of course, is not Chamberlain. There is not, and cannot be any analogy between them. But the fact that his “maneuver” recalls the “maneuver” of Chamberlain should be a sufficient warning for him.

But the declaration does not stop there. It goes further. Passing from the defensive to the offensive, it proclaims the necessity of fighting the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, as decisions, which, it is declared, are against the line of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. It plainly states that the draft decision, the draft for the “Open Letter of the Comintern”, which here in the Presidium meets with general approval, and which in all likelihood will be approved by the Presidium of the Comintern – it plainly states that this draft is contrary to the letter and spirit of the line of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International. The declaration plainly states that: “The new draft letter ... makes an estimate of our Party work”, (i.e. the work of the Communist Party of America), “...and leadership totally at variance with the line and decisions of the Sixth World Congress...”

I shall not attempt to show that these assertions of the declaration are a petty and unworthy libel on the Comintern and its executive organs. It is also not worth attempting to show that it is in fact the

present leaders of the majority of the Communist Party of America who have violated, and continue to violate, the basic decisions of the Congresses of the Comintern and its executive organs on the question of liquidating factionalism in the American Communist Party.

Comrade Kuusinen has fully shown in his speech that both factions of the American Communist Party and particularly the majority faction, have, beginning in 1925, systematically violated the fundamental decisions of the Congresses of the Comintern regarding the liquidation of factionalism and the establishment of unity. One has only to acquaint oneself with the resolutions of the Congresses of the Comintern to convince oneself that in the leaders of the present majority we have incorrigible violators of the spirit and letter of the decisions of the Comintern.

As to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, in its decision on the American Communist Party it plainly declares that “the chief task of the Party is to put an end to the factional struggle, which is not based on any serious differences of principle.” What has the group of Comrade Lovestone done to carry out this decision of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern? You can see for yourselves, comrades, that so far it has done nothing in this direction. On the contrary, it has done, and is doing, everything possible to transform

the decision of the Sixth Congress into a scrap of paper. Such are the facts.

And if, in spite of all these facts, the declaration nevertheless accuses the Presidium of the ECCI with violating the “letter and spirit of the line of the Sixth World Congress,” what does it mean? It means that the authors of the declaration desire to oppose the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI to the line of the Sixth World Congress, which they themselves violated and continue to violate.

And why do they do that? In order, pharisaically concealing themselves under the flag of the Sixth Congress, to conduct a fight against the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI. In this way the authors of the declaration, so to speak, declare: We, the Lovestone group are for the Sixth Congress, but the draft for the “Open Letter of the Presidium of the ECCI” contradicts the line of the Sixth Congress; therefore, we must, and shall, fight the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI. The authors of the declaration apparently think there is something new in this deceitful “maneuver” and that we shall fail to decipher what is the concealed meaning of their “maneuver.” Not so, comrades. They are mistaken in their reckoning. The history of the Comintern shows that comrades who have moved away from the Comintern always begin with just such “maneuvers”.