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# Statement of the CEC on the Suspension of the 19 Russian Members [circa September 20, 1921]

Transcript in weekly report for week of Oct. 15, 1921 by Agent J.F. McDevitt.  
DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA collection M-1085, reel 938, file 202600-1617-67, pp. 5-7.

Quotation of the charges of the representative of the CEC [presumably J. Wilenkin]:

These members left the Conference of the Russian Federation before its termination, against the protest of the Conference and the objection of the representative of the CEC; refused to recognize the authority of the CEC in appointing its representative to open the Conference; would not turn over their credentials to the representative of the CEC and the arrangements committee members; would not answer a roll call to ascertain the identity of those present; and caused an uproar and disturbance endangering the safety of the Conference; did everything to disrupt the Conference; and conducting themselves in a manner unworthy of representative communists.

Furthermore, some of the members violated the instructions of the CEC in attending the conference without receiving credentials through regular Party channels, and others threatened violence to the representative of the CEC.

*The events leading to this conference are as follows:*

Prior to the conference, the CEC had approved the motions of DO2 [New York: Hyman Costrell] at the Russian District Conference in allowing Sub-District 3 [Bridgeport, CT] 2 of the 3 delegates which they took the liberty to elect.† According to the minutes of the District Committee 2 of August 21 [1921], the Russian membership of the sub-district was given as follows: “Ansonia, 16; Seymore, 7; Waterbury, 14; Nenticutt, 7, and New Haven, 18. The total is 62, entitling SD3 [Bridgeport] to 2 delegates. Report of SDO3 [“Stanley”] was accepted.

The DO2 [Costrell] was carrying out the instructions of the District Committee in giving representation to only 2 of the 3 delegates. Twelve other delegates thereupon refused to participate in the conference, in order to sent contesting delegates to the National Conference, counting upon one of the members of the Arrangements Committee for connections. The CEC upon the report of the DO2 [Costrell] approved his actions and condemned the conduct of the 12 delegates in refraining from participation in the Conference as tending to undisciplined action and being a violation of fundamental communist discipline and the constitution of the Party. The CEC then informed the members of the Arrangements Committee of the ruling made for all conferences, that no member not certified by the DO as a regular elected delegate shall be given connections.

At the request of all the members of the Arrangements Committee, the CEC appointed its representative [Wilenkin] to open the conference. He found present 24 regularly elected delegates, the 6 contested delegates from District 2 [New York] and 3 fraternal delegates representing the paper #2 [*Novyi Mir*] and the former Russian Federation EC. As the representative of the CEC in charge of the convention [was] in charge until [the gathering] had regularly constituted itself, he requested that all those who had credentials present them to the Arrangements Committee, with which he would cooperate in forming the Credentials

†- Much of this faction brouhaha is related to the July 28, 1921 sacking of George Ashkenuzi as the District Organizer for the New York District [D2] and his replacement by Costrell [“Funk”]. The pretext for this change related to the fact that Ashkenuzi also sat as a member of the Central Executive Committee, and that he was thus attempting to fill two full-time jobs. In reality, there were no doubt factional machinations going on, Ashkenuzi being a hardline member of the old Communist Party of America and Russian Federationist and Costrell hailing from the Jewish Federation and being of a relatively less doctrinaire orientation. While Costrell himself hailed from the old CPA rather than the UCP, he was no doubt viewed by the CPA Left as a collaborator in the vein of Russian Federationist and CEC member J. Wilenkin [“Paul”] and Lithuanian Federationist and CEC member Joseph Stilson [“Ray”].

Committee. This 10 delegates, acting as a faction with those whose presence at the conference was a violation of the Party constitution, refused to do.†

They instead maneuvered to disrupt the conference by refusing to participate in the conference, or even permitting the conference to go on. The representative of the CI [presumably Karlis Janson, pseudonym “Scott”] then pleaded with them not to violate Party discipline. They continually interrupted him and then garbled his statements to such an extent that he was compelled to file a protest with the Conference against this conduct.

At this point, Comrade Marshall [Max Bedacht], the delegate from the 3rd Congress of the CI took the floor. They refused to listen to him and caused such an uproar that he was compelled to discontinue his talk. The disruption of these members rose to such a point that the representative of the CEC [Wilenskin], at the request of the proprietor of the hall, adjourned the opening session.

The minutes of this conference have been published in Russian and are being circulated by the Russian Federation.

The CEC representative [Janson] thereafter opened the conference again, in accordance with the instructions of the CEC. He called the roll of the delegations by Districts. The delegates from District 1 [Boston], 4 [Cleveland], and 6 [Detroit] as well as the fraternal delegates from paper #2 [*Novyi Mir*] and former EC from the Russian Federation refused to answer the call. The CEC representative [Janson] then constituted the conference of all those who submitted their credentials and the conference proceeded to regular business despite the organized attempt to further disrupt it. The conference was, however, compelled to hasten adjournment of the first session because of the continuous and deliberate efforts to interfere with its work by those who refused to recognize the authority of the CEC [Wilenskin] or the please of the represen-

tative of the CI [Janson] and the delegate of the 3rd Congress [Bedacht].

During the night they informed the delegate from the CI [Janson] that they would not recognize the authority of the CEC unless they were given at least half of the delegation from District 2 [New York]. The representative of the CI told them that they must first recognize the authority of the CEC representative [Wilenskin] and then if dissatisfied with his conduct to protest to the CEC. They rejected this advice.‡ At the opening of the second session they presented a resolution attacking the CEC and again insisting in their refusal to recognize the authority of the CEC. The CEC representative [Janson] called upon Comrade K. [“Kelly”=George Ashkenuzi] to appear before the conference and give the financial and organizational report of the Arrangements Committee and the former EC of the Russian Federation. This he refused to do, stating that under no conditions would he recognize the CEC authority.

Soon after a delegation of these members with Comrade M [=???) at their head appeared before the CEC representative [Wilenskin] and presented a bill for \$600. This claim was made to cover the expenses not only of those who refused to participate in the conference, but also those whose presence at the conference was a violation of the Party constitution. The CEC representative [Wilenskin] then informed the delegation that he was instructed to defray the expenses of those who participated in the conference and that anyone who did have credentials and presented same to the conference would receive expenses incurred. The spokesman of the delegation then declared that two courses were open to them: 1. To obey the instructions of the CEC, and the other, “to grab you and choke you and take the money and you know we have the power to do so.” The CEC representative [Wilenskin] replied that under no conditions would he violate the party instructions. They then left the confer-

†- *Reading between the lines here, knowing that the suspended delegates were oppositionists to the CEC Majority and to Wilenskin:* It seems that the disruption was a reaction to a perceived play to “steal” a majority of the Russian Conference — the faction of 10 plus the group of 6 “contested” New York District delegates adding up to a voting majority of a Conference consisting of 24+6 = 30 delegates. A stacking of the Credentials Committee by Wilenskin would have made possible the exclusion of the 6 “contested” delegates, thus tipping the majority and control of the conference over to supporters of Wilenskin and the CEC Majority, assuring them of a “friendly” new leadership in the powerful Russian Federation.

‡- The chances of an appeal to a CEC in which Wilenskin sat in the majority overturning the actions of Wilenskin in the Russian conference would have been slight.

ence against the protest of the conference and the orders of the representative of the CEC [Wilenskin].

Throughout the sessions these comrades were in direct touch with outside sources in direct violation of regular party precautions taken to secure the safety of underground conferences.

These comrades later issued a statement in which they attacked the CEC representative [Wilenskin] and the CEC in language unspeakably shameful.

Upon the report of the CEC representative [Wilenskin] and the representative of the CI [Janson], in which the latter characterized the conduct of these members "as the most disruptive and undisciplined" and the worst behavior he had ever witnessed, the CEC decided to suspend these 19 comrades pending investigation of each individual case. The vote on this motion was 7 for, 2 against, and 1 voting present.

The CEC is investigating each case. It feels that some of the members were acting under the misleading advice and pressure of the most conspicuous in the delegation.

The lies and misrepresentations circulated by some of these comrades regarding their behavior at the conference only adds to their already shameful and uncommunist conduct.

*Central Executive Committee,  
Communist Party of America.*

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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