

Dog Days

**James P. Cannon vs.
Max Shachtman
in the Communist League
of America, 1931-1933**





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in the Communist League of America**

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Dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America 1931-1933

**James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman,
Leon Trotsky, and Others**

Compiled, Introduced, and Edited by the
Prometheus Research Library



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Cover photos: Leon Trotsky at his desk in Prinkipo, 1931.

Photo by Jean Weinberg.

Inset: Shachtman (left) and Cannon in Paris at time of founding of Fourth International, 1938. Photo courtesy Albert Glotzer.

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To our comrades
Susan Adams (1948–2001)
Mary Van De Water-Quirk (1954–2000)
whose work contributed to this book

Contents

Editorial Note.....	xvi
Introduction by the Prometheus Research Library	1

I. Shachtman in the International

The April Conference: A Disappointment in All Respects Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 16 April 1930	83
Where Is the International Secretariat? Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 18 August 1930	86
Shachtman to Be Part of International Bureau Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 17 November 1930 ...	89
Crisis in the French Ligue Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 25 November 1930 ...	92
We Must Endeavor to Collaborate With Naville and Rosmer Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 17 December 1930.....	98
Landau Has Proven to Be a Very Unreliable Fellow Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 6 January 1931.....	102
The Fight Against Landau and Naville Is Too Sharp Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 4 March 1931	106
What Is Your Position on the German Crisis? Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 4 April 1931	108
On Landau, Prometeo, and Weisbord Max Shachtman to the International Secretariat, [Early May 1931]	109
I Sought to Avoid a Premature Split in the German Section Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 2 May 1931	112
You Bear Some Responsibility for Landau's Course Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 23 May 1931	114

Neville Plays With Ideas	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman,	
2 August 1931	117
Get the Secretariat's Cart Out of the Mud	
Jan Frankel to Max Shachtman, 14 November 1931	119
Molinier Is Far From Correct	
Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 1 December 1931	121
Who Then Should Lead the Ligue?	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 11 December 1931 . .	132
You Were Never on Our Side	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 25 December 1931 . .	133
Shachtman's Personal and Journalistic Sympathies	
Leon Trotsky to the CLA National Committee,	
25 December 1931	135
Too Much the Journalist	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman,	
31 December 1931	136
Why Did the <i>Militant</i> Print Felix's Article?	
Leon Trotsky to the CLA National Committee,	
5 January 1932	139
I Do Not Agree With Shachtman	
Albert Glotzer to Leon Trotsky, 21 January 1932	141
Shachtman Acted on His Own Authority	
Arne Swabeck to Leon Trotsky, 22 January 1932	144
We Should Have Informed Trotsky of American Problems	
Albert Glotzer to Maurice Spector, 3 February 1932 . . .	147
You Must Remain at Your Post	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 10 February 1932 . . .	149

II. The Fight

Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics!	
Arne Swabeck, published 5 March 1932	153
Statement on "Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics!"	
Max Shachtman, 12 March 1932	155

A Bad Situation in the American League Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 13 March 1932	170
Statement on the Situation in the International Left Opposition James P. Cannon, 15 March 1932	174
Draft Statement on International Questions Albert Glotzer, 15 March 1932	177
Draft Statement on the ILO Martin Abern, 15 March 1932	179
A Definite Conflict of Views Arne Swabek to the International Secretariat and Leon Trotsky, 2 April 1932	180
On the Motion for a Plenary Session of the NC Max Shachtman, 4 April 1932	184
Statement on Holding Plenum James P. Cannon, 4 April 1932	186
The Real Basis of Our Differences Albert Glotzer to Leon Trotsky, 5 April 1932	187
Report on National Tour Albert Glotzer, 11 April 1932	197
Cannon and Swabek Have Rightist Tendencies John Edwards to Max Shachtman, 16 April 1932	208
The Organizational Status of the CLA Arne Swabek, 18 April 1932	212
The Coal Drivers in Minneapolis Carl Skoglund to the National Committee, 18 April 1932	216
Personal Combinations vs. Revolutionary Politics Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer, 1 May 1932	218
You Must Take Us Into Your Confidence Maurice Spector to Max Shachtman, 10 May 1932	220

On Weisbord and International Questions	
Leon Trotsky to the CLA National Committee, 19 May 1932	222
I Prefer Weisbord's Methods to Shachtman's	
Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer, 3 June 1932	224
I Am Not an American Naville	
Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 4 June 1932	225
The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect	
Martin Abern, Albert Glotzer, and Max Shachtman, 4 June 1932	230
Minutes of the Plenum	
CLA National Committee, 10-13 June 1932	282
Some Considerations on the Results of the National Committee Plenum	
[Shachtman Group], 16 June 1932	298
Draft Statement to the Membership on the National Committee Plenum	
James P. Cannon, 25 June 1932	306
Statement of the National Committee (Minority): The Results of the Plenum of the National Committee	
Martin Abern, Albert Glotzer, and Max Shachtman, 29 June 1932	315
What Position Will You Take?	
Max Shachtman to John Edwards, 3 July 1932	323
A Great Relief	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 4 July 1932	325
Reply of the National Committee to the Minority Statement	
James P. Cannon, 14 July 1932	326
Molinier's Personality Is Not the Issue	
Max Shachtman to Andrés Nin, 19 July 1932	341
A Reply on Field and Weisbord	
Leon Trotsky to the CLA National Committee, 20 October 1932	345

Cannon Is Prepared to Break With the ILO	
Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 31 October 1932	349
Developments in Light of the Failed Co-optations	
Max Shachtman to a Comrade, 26 November 1932	352
Mobilize Against Swabeck's Trip to Europe	
Max Shachtman to a Comrade, 2 December 1932	361
We Want More Direct Contact	
Arne Swabeck to the International Secretariat and Leon Trotsky, 16 December 1932	363
Cannon Overreaches Himself	
Maurice Spector to Max Shachtman, 29 December 1932	367
Results of the Postplenum Discussion	
Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, 3 January 1933	371
Cannon's Regime Is on a Par With Landau's	
Max Shachtman to Maurice Spector, 3 January 1933 . . .	384
Cannon's Suave Calumny	
Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer, 8 January 1933	391
Against Cannon as National Secretary	
Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, 9 January 1933	395
For Cannon as National Secretary	
Arne Swabeck and Hugo Oehler, 10 January 1933	397
On Assuming the Post of National Secretary	
James P. Cannon, 10 January 1933	402
No Financial Sabotage	
Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, 23 January 1933 . . .	403
Cannon a New Man in Chicago	
Albert Glotzer to Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, 6 February 1933	412
Resolution on the Proletarianization of the New York Branch	
National Committee [Cannon Group], [Early February 1933]	416

Reject the Proposal on the Proletarianization of the New York Branch NY Executive Committee [Shachtman Group], [Early February 1933]	418
Motion on the Situation in Germany and the Role of the Red Army Max Shachtman, 20 February 1933	421
The Red Army and the German Revolution James P. Cannon, 24 February 1933	424
Motion on the Illinois Mining Campaign Max Shachtman, 24 February 1933	429
Statement on the Dispute over the Red Army and the German Situation Max Shachtman, 12 March 1933	435
Note on Shachtman's Statement James P. Cannon, published 18 March 1933	446
Motion on April Gillespie Conference James P. Cannon, 29 March 1933	448
Motion on CLA Delegate at Gillespie Max Shachtman, 29 March 1933	452

III. The International Intervenes

Resolution on the Situation in the American Section International Preconference of the ILO, 4-8 February 1933	455
The International Must Apply the Brakes Discussion Between Leon Trotsky and Arne Swabeck, 27 February 1933	456
On the Situation in the American League Leon Trotsky to the International Secretariat, 7 March 1933	467
The Majority Has No Right to Impatience Leon Trotsky to Arne Swabeck, 7 March 1933	472

I Accept Your Criticisms	
Arne Swabeck to Leon Trotsky, 8 March 1933	474
You Were Wrong to Campaign Against Swabeck's Trip	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 8 March 1933	477
Trotsky Expects More of Us	
Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon, 8 March 1933	478
A Split Would Be a Catastrophe	
Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer, 14 March 1933	488
Germany and the USSR	
Leon Trotsky, 17 March 1933	489
We Have Made Some Errors	
James P. Cannon to Comrades, 27 March 1933	492
Resolution on the Situation in the American League	
International Secretariat, [April 1933]	493
Concession on Organizational Questions	
James P. Cannon, 5 April 1933	495
Response on Organizational Questions	
Max Shachtman, 7 April 1933	496
Request for Advice on Allard	
James P. Cannon to Leon Trotsky, 14 April 1933	498
We Don't Want a Split	
Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 15 April 1933	499
Setting a Date for the Conference	
Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon, 16 April 1933	504
An Offensive for Unity	
Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon, 16 April 1933	506
I Am Not More Favorable to the Minority	
Leon Trotsky to the International Secretariat, 17 April 1933	507
Shachtman Flounders Between Scholasticism and Softness on Stalinism	
Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon, 17 April 1933	509

We Will Not Suspend Our Fight	
Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer, 17 April 1933	512
Allard Must Take a Stand Against Redbaiting	
James P. Cannon, 19 April 1933	513
Allard Discredits Left Opposition	
Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, 19 April 1933	516
A Cold Douche	
Maurice Spector to Max Shachtman, 24 April 1933	518
Our Group Must Not Dissolve	
Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer, 1 May 1933	519
The European Sections Will Not Support You	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 1 May 1933	529
International Consultation Is Key	
Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon, 12 May 1933	530
Resolution on the American Question	
Plenum of the International Left Opposition, 13–16 May 1933	534
Foolish and Petty Actions Did Not Help Us	
Albert Glotzer to Max Shachtman, 23 May 1933	536
Peace Treaty	
Communist League of America National Committee published 29 June 1933	542
We Must Call a Retreat	
Max Shachtman to Comrades, 9 June 1933	543
Report from Prinkipo	
Max Shachtman to Martin Abern, 6 July 1933	552
The “Master’s” Ways	
Martin Abern to Albert Glotzer, 6 July 1933	557
A Possible Leap Forward	
Arne Swabeck to the International Secretariat and Leon Trotsky, 10 July 1933	565
A Radical Change Is Necessary	
Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer, 12 July 1933	568

I Won't Make an Issue of Chicago Move	
Max Shachtman to Martin Abern, 13 July 1933	570
Action Program of the Communist League	
National Committee, [August 1933]	581
Implementing the Action Program	
Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer,	
7 September 1933	583
A Big Mistake	
Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer,	
19 September 1933	586
Trade-Union Problems in America	
Leon Trotsky, 23 September 1933	591
Cannon Is Reneging	
Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky, 5 October 1933	594
The News Is Disquieting	
Leon Trotsky to Arne Swabeck, 20 November 1933	598
A Turn for the Worse	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 25 November 1933	599
Reasons to Postpone the Move	
Arne Swabeck to Leon Trotsky, 20 December 1933	600
As Opportunities Grow, Internal Struggle Will Diminish	
Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman, 30 January 1934	605
Notes	607
Glossary	652
References	693
Index	699
Photo Credits	714

Editorial Note

In the political youth of James Robertson, co-editor of this compilation, the subject matter of this book had a somewhat mystical and mythical quality, wherein might be found the origins of the profound 1940 scission in the Trotskyist (i.e., the authentic communist) movement. In 1939–40 Max Shachtman, bowing to the anti-Communist hysteria that accompanied the Hitler-Stalin pact, abandoned the program of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union and split along with some 40 percent of the membership from the American Socialist Workers Party led by James P. Cannon. Shachtman and some of those who left with him went on to establish the rival Workers Party (WP).

The fight in the SWP coincided with the outbreak of World War II in Europe; many Trotskyist organizations were functioning in conditions of illegality. Thus the six-month discussion in the SWP “became in effect a discussion for the entire Fourth International and was followed with passionate interest by the members of all sections” (*Fourth International*, May 1940). Claiming that the Fourth International had been destroyed by the outbreak of the war and the SWP split, Shachtman sought to extend his support internationally. But the WP’s American Committee for the Fourth International was upheld by only a few weak and demoralized sections such as the Brazilian and Uruguayan. Even before the Workers Party changed its name to the Independent Socialist League (ISL) in 1949, it had ceased to claim any connection with the Fourth International.

As a member of Shachtman’s organization from 1949 to 1958, and then of the SWP until 1963, Robertson heard talk about a factional struggle in the Communist League of America of the early 1930s, pitting Cannon and his supporters on one side against Shachtman and his supporters on the other. Robertson was naturally curious, since this political struggle predated by almost a decade the definitive split. But it was next to impossible to find documentation. Cannon’s *History of American Trotskyism*, published in 1944, gave intriguing hints, but not much substance. Albert Glotzer’s scathing review, “James P. Cannon as Historian,” pub-

lished in *New International* in 1945, contained more. But most of the (very few) veteran WP/ISL cadres and (more numerous) SWP cadres whose history stretched back to the CLA claimed that the early fight had little significance. Copies of the CLA *Internal Bulletins* were very rare. Robertson still remembers how his hands were pried off CLA bulletins left in the care of the New York WP literature maven. Having tantalized Robertson, the New Yorker finally refused to sell the bulletins because their previous owner might reclaim them.

As part of the Revolutionary Tendency expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in 1963, Robertson became one of the founding leaders of the Spartacist League. In the early 1970s he and other SL members interested in archival research interviewed CLA veterans who had split from the Trotskyist movement with the ultraleftist Hugo Oehler in 1935. These former members of Oehler's Revolutionary Workers League (by then dissolved) also claimed the CLA fight had little bearing on later developments in the Trotskyist movement. Around the same time the SL finally acquired copies of the long-sought CLA *Internal Bulletins*. These supplemented Robertson's personal holdings, which became the nucleus for the collection of the Prometheus Research Library, archive and research facility of the SL Central Committee.

Only part of the story of the CLA fight was told in the bulletins. The picture was rounded out a few years later when the PRL finally procured a copy of "The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect," Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer's 4 June 1932 magnum opus. In 1979 most of Trotsky's letters on the CLA fight were published in Pathfinder's collection, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, Supplement 1929-33*. In 1985 Monad Press published James P. Cannon's *Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34*, which included many of Cannon's letters and documents from the CLA factional struggle.

In the early 1990s, Emily Turnbull began to work with Robertson, looking for additional material to accompany "Prospect and Retrospect" in a Prometheus Research Series bulletin. They expected to find only a few additional documents, but they were wrong. Searching the personal papers of most of the key protagonists, now deposited in various libraries around the country, Turnbull found a wealth of correspondence, minutes, and documents that fleshed out the story of the 1931-33 dispute in the

CLA. The PRL determined to make the key documentation accessible to future generations of revolutionaries in book form.

We include in this collection only a very few of the documents available in Monad's selection of Cannon writings for the period, published as James P. Cannon's *Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34*. Readers are referred there and to Monad's edition of James P. Cannon's *Writings and Speeches: The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31* for useful companion volumes to our collection.

At the end of this book readers will find a References section listing the archival collections consulted. Footnotes to individual documents give their archival origins; abbreviations used in the footnotes are delineated in the References section. An extensive glossary of names, organizations, and terms possibly unfamiliar to the contemporary reader is provided at the end of the volume. Acronyms used throughout the volume are listed in the index.

We thank the librarians at Archives of the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace, the Houghton Library at Harvard University, the Tamiment Library at New York University, and the Wayne State University Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs for their help, and for permission to publish material from their collections. We are grateful to the librarians and staff at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for their assistance to our research. Special thanks go to Peter Filardo of the Tamiment Library for giving us early access to the papers of George Breitman, and to Dale Reed of the Hoover Institution Archives, who helped us in innumerable ways, including deciphering handwriting in some of the letters.

Most of the Trotsky letters published here have been translated from the German; if the original is in English, or if the translation is from a language other than German, this is specified in the footnotes. Mary Ann Shiffman, Robert Michaels, Doris Altman, Frank Beaton-Walter, and Christoph Stüdemann translated from the German. Translation from the French was by Blandine Hauser, François Diacono, and Susan Adams. Translation from the Russian was by Victor Granovsky.

Many of the documents that appear in this book are letters, draft manuscripts, and minutes not originally meant for publication. We have limited editing to standardizing spelling, punctuation, and style, and to correcting what appeared to us to be obvious errors in the originals, such as dropped words. We have not

checked the accuracy of quotations cited by the authors, but we have edited all quotations to conform to our style of punctuation and spelling. The official name of the American Trotskyist organization was the Communist League of America (Opposition), reflecting its political orientation as an expelled faction of the Communist Party. Since the word "(Opposition)" was inconsistently used by most authors, we have used the simple Communist League of America throughout. We have always capitalized League when the authors use this term to refer to the CLA; when the French section of the ILO is referenced, Ligue is used.

To help the reader, we have standardized some inconsistencies of the original authors, who sometimes referred to the CLA's leading body as the National Executive Committee instead of its constitutionally established name, National Committee. Similarly, we have standardized to "resident committee" all references to the smaller body composed of National Committee members resident in New York. In the original documents this body was variously referred to as resident National Committee, resident Executive Committee, and Resident Committee. But the reader should be aware that many authors use "National Committee" to refer both to the New York resident body and to the broader committee. All bracketed insertions are by the editors; unless ellipses and parentheses are bracketed, they are the original author's. Brief introductions give background information about some selections and state their published source, if any. The date given for most documents is the date of writing; where we list the publication date, this is specified. Dates in brackets are estimates by the editors.

The compilation and selection of the material, as well as the introduction, glossary, and editorial notes, were centrally the work of Emily Turnbull and James Robertson. Amy Richardson copy-edited the manuscript, checked facts, and prepared the References section. Helene Brosius was production manager. Cover and photo pages designed by Victor Granovsky and Bruce Mishkin. Robert Michaels prepared the index. Naoli Bray, Michael Doerner, François Diacono, Lisa Diamond, Rena Herson, Therese Jahn, Janet John, Sam Kaehler, Diana Kartsen, Carl Lichtenstein, Gayle Lovell, Tim Marinetti, Gary Mueller, Koula Quirk, Paul Ricks, Martha Robertson, Janet Root, Caron Salinger, Mary Ann Shiffman, and Mary Van De Water-Quirk aided in the archival and historical research and/or were part of the production crew.

What is the primary purpose of a discussion in a communist organization? It is not to discredit one another, not to exalt some and push others down, not to present matters as prosecution on the one side and defense on the other. No, the primary purpose is to clarify the principled questions, to educate the comrades on the meaning of the dispute of the moment, to teach them to penetrate the essence of a question and draw their inferences accordingly, so that the lessons are firmly gained and remembered for the future, when similar problems will arise in different forms. In other words, the primary aim of a discussion conducted by communist leaders is to teach the comrades to think and to fight politically, to grasp the main aspects of a question, to go by principle and not to be sidetracked by incidental matters. The acquisition of this method is the condition sine qua non for our comrades to fulfill their mission as the vanguard of the vanguard, not only in future disputes within the ranks of the Left Opposition, but also, and especially, in conflicts with the other party factions, and beyond that in the broad class struggle and in the general labor movement, where they will encounter all kinds of demagogues who are masters of all kinds of tricks.

— James P. Cannon, “Draft on the Internal Struggle”
July 1932, *Writings and Speeches: The Communist
League of America 1932–34*

Introduction

When the Fourth International (FI) was founded in September 1938 to carry on the struggle for international proletarian revolution betrayed by the Stalinist Third (Communist) International, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the United States was its largest and apparently most stable section. The SWP leadership core around James P. Cannon and Max Shachtman had benefited from some years of close political collaboration with Leon Trotsky, especially after his arrival in Mexico in early 1937. The U.S. Trotskyists were the only national group of the FI to have augmented their forces through regroupment with a centrist formation (A.J. Muste's American Workers Party in 1934) and through short-term entry into the leftward-moving Socialist Party (SP) in 1936-37. These tactics, advocated by Trotsky, met with little success elsewhere. At its founding in early January 1938, the SWP had some 1,500 members, with organized support in the Teamsters, United Auto Workers (UAW), and maritime unions.

Yet from 1931 to 1933, during a period of stagnation that Cannon later aptly labeled "the dog days of the movement," an intense internal struggle rent the American Trotskyists, then numbering fewer than 200 members and known as the Communist League of America (CLA).¹ As the letters, articles, circulars, and minutes in this collection reveal, the two factions, around Cannon on the one hand and Shachtman on the other, came to the verge of an organizational break in early 1933, a split that Trotsky feared could lead to the stillbirth of American Trotskyism.

The CLA was the American section of the International Left Opposition (ILO), which was founded a few months after Trotsky was forced into exile from the USSR. In a June 1929 declaration issued after a series of meetings at Trotsky's residence in Prinkipo, Turkey, the ILO claimed the heritage of the first four congresses of the Communist International (Comintern or CI). The ILO declared its principal aim to be the regroupment of dissident Communists on the basis of the program that the Russian Left Opposition had fought for in the internal party struggles of 1923-28.² Regarding itself as an expelled faction of the Comintern, the

ILO fought to return the Soviet Union and Communist International to Lenin's revolutionary internationalism. Thus when the Trotskyists refer to "the Party" in the documents in this book, they mean not the CLA or any other ILO section, but the Communist Party (CP) or Comintern.

Many dissident Communists attracted to Trotsky's banner had only a hazy idea of the Russian Opposition's platform since most of its documents were banned in the Russian party and unavailable abroad. Some ILO adherents had been supporters, not of the Trotskyist Left Opposition, but of the mercurial centrist Grigori Zinoviev, with whom the Trotskyists were allied in the United Opposition of 1926-27. Some were followers of the Italian ultraleftist Amadeo Bordiga, organized in the Italian Prometeo Group. The first four years of Trotsky's exile therefore saw intense political struggle within the ILO, as he sought, largely unsuccessfully, to win the Bordigists and those trained in the maneuverist school of Zinoviev to genuine Bolshevism and to weed out accidental, dilettantish, and cliquist elements. Only with the authoritative International Preconference, held in Paris in February 1933, did the ILO achieve a degree of political cohesion and organizational stability.

Origin of the Conflict

The factional polarization in the Communist League of America was precipitated in early 1932 when Cannon sought—over Shachtman's opposition—to put the CLA on record in support of Trotsky's positions in the internal struggles then roiling the ILO in Europe. Shachtman was the first CLA representative to meet with Trotsky in Prinkipo, and he attended the first European ILO gathering in April 1930, which Trotsky hoped would put the Opposition on a firmer organizational and political basis. In November 1930 Shachtman was co-opted onto the International Bureau as a representative of the CLA. In late 1931 he traveled to France, Spain, and England. Yet, as the documents reveal, Shachtman attempted to blunt Trotsky's sharp attacks on the opportunism and cliquism of those with whom he had worked in Europe—Kurt Landau, Pierre Naville, Andrés Nin, and M. Mill. Increasingly frustrated with Shachtman, in December 1931 Trotsky finally wrote to the CLA National Committee (NC) to inquire if Shachtman's actions in international matters reflected the views of the CLA leadership. In answer Cannon initiated a fight for the

CLA to take a formal position against the trade-union opportunist and dilettantish elements represented by Naville in France. This collection documents how Shachtman and his allies, Albert Glotzer, Martin Abern, and Maurice Spector, obstructed Cannon's efforts, seeking to cover for Shachtman's irresponsibility in Europe and revealing in their cliquist approach to internal party struggle their affinity with Trotsky's opponents in Europe.

Shachtman retreated from his course of confrontation with Trotsky in June 1932, to the great relief of Trotsky, who feared that Shachtman's alignment with Naville, Nin, and Mill might precipitate an international split and the creation of a centrist tendency opposed to the ILO. Yet the factional warfare within the CLA continued and even deepened over the next year, fueled by myriad organizational disputes and grievances going back to 1929. In the absence of decisive programmatic differences, Trotsky and the ILO secretariat (I.S.) intervened sharply in spring 1933 to put an end to the destructive polarization. A continuation of the fight could only have meant the disintegration of the CLA into two competing groups with no obvious differences, both claiming adherence to the ILO, as was the case in Austria and elsewhere. The I.S. intervention coincided with an upturn in domestic class struggle that provided the Trotskyists with the opportunity in 1934 to lead the strikes that won union recognition for the Minneapolis Teamsters. This was one of the three great proletarian struggles in the United States that year, the others being the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, Ohio and the three-day general strike precipitated in San Francisco by a hard-fought longshoremen's struggle. The opening for broader work and recruitment from the working class was the precondition for the subsequent six years of close political collaboration between Cannon and Shachtman and led to the formation of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938.

Yet Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer's lengthy 4 June 1932 document, "The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect" (hereafter referred to as "Prospect and Retrospect"), published here for the first time, harps on many of the organizational themes that obsessed them in 1940, when they broke definitively from revolutionary Marxism. Capitulating to the anti-Communism sweeping the petty bourgeoisie in the wake of the Hitler-Stalin pact, the Shachtmanites in 1940 followed the petty-bourgeois pedant James Burnham in insisting that the USSR's

military alliance with Germany negated the international proletariat's duty to unconditionally defend the Soviet degenerated workers state against imperialist invasion and internal counterrevolution. Trotsky and Cannon, their collaboration cemented by years of joint work—beginning in 1933 with the resolution of the CLA's destructive fight—led the programmatic struggle against Shachtman and Burnham in the SWP, a fight that remains decisive for Trotskyism to the present day.³

Shachtman's abandonment of the program of military defense of the USSR was the first step on the road to outright support for U.S. imperialism. By 1957 he lamented the 1919 Socialist Party split that led to the formation of the Communist Party, and in 1958 he liquidated his organization into the pathetic remnants of the American social democracy. At that point Cannon wrote:

Despite my long association with Shachtman from the days of his earliest youth, I have not been able to summon up a trace of sympathy for his evolution from a slim young rebel into a fat and fatheaded old social democrat. An old man repenting the "follies" of his youth, which were in reality his glories, merely nudges me to cold disgust.⁴

Shachtman moved ever more rapidly to the right after entering the SP; he ended his life a member of the Democratic Party and supporter of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and U.S. imperialism's bloody war against the social revolution in Vietnam.

In 1931-33 no principled or programmatic element was in dispute after Shachtman gave way on the international questions. But the earlier struggle in the CLA clearly *presaged* the definitive 1940 split. The factional lineup within the SWP National Committee cadre whose membership dated to the early CLA was almost identical in both fights, with Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer pitted against Cannon, Arne Swabeck, Vincent Dunne, and Carl Skoglund (the one exception was Morris Lewit, a Shachtman supporter in the CLA but a Cannon stalwart in 1939-40). The earlier fight reverberated throughout the 1939-40 struggle. In a December 1939 delegated conference of the New York City membership, Shachtman challenged Cannon to circulate "Prospect and Retrospect," which had never been published in the CLA *Internal Bulletin*.⁵ In sending Trotsky his central polemic against Shachtman and Abern, "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party," Cannon noted, "Its length must be excused on the ground that the dam of ten years patience has been broken down."⁶

Unearthing the Historical Record

Except for the period of the 1939–40 fight, the near split in the CLA was downplayed or hidden by the principal protagonists on both sides. In *History of American Trotskyism*, a series of lectures delivered in spring 1942 and subsequently published by the SWP, Cannon aptly characterized the internal struggle in the CLA as “the premature rehearsal of the great, definitive struggle of 1939–40.” But he described only a “sea of petty troubles, jealousies, clique formations and internal fights”—not a deep-going organizational polarization and near split.⁷ In autobiographical interviews recorded in 1963 Shachtman gave an even more cursory treatment, mentioning only “more than one polemical and factional struggle inside the Trotskyist movement, some of them very sharp” between “Cannon and his friends on the one side and myself and my friends on the other side.”⁸

When the Prometheus Research Library made a concerted attempt to find out more about the CLA faction fight, interviewing participants such as Carl Cowl, Morris Lewit, Hugo Oehler, Tom Stamm, and Arne Swabeck, they all denied the gravity of the situation revealed in the documents we publish here.⁹ Albert Glotzer was the sole participant in the earlier struggle who kept his memory—and anti-Cannon diatribes—alive. By the time of our interview in 1993, Glotzer was a leader of the rabidly anti-Communist Social Democrats USA and his sympathies lay with the imperialist secret services. (Richard Valcourt, editor of the *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, spoke at his 1999 memorial meeting.) Obscenely, Glotzer continued to insist that Cannon had never been a true Bolshevik-Leninist.¹⁰

Secondary histories have unfortunately followed the cursory reminiscences of most CLA leaders. Constance Ashton Myers describes only a “minor quarrel” in the CLA over Cannon’s criticisms of the sterile intellectualism of the New York youth.¹¹ The CLA faction fight is ignored in *Trotskyism in the United States*, a collection of essays by George Breitman, Paul Le Blanc, and Alan Wald.¹² Peter Drucker’s 1994 biography of Shachtman contains only a few cursory paragraphs that trivialize Shachtman’s disagreements with Trotsky on the work in Europe.¹³

Our search of known archival sources (see the References section) unearthed some 600 documents on the 1931–33 fight and

the preceding organizational disputes and correspondence with Trotsky on international questions, including letters, minutes of the New York resident committee of the CLA National Committee, documents from CLA *Internal Bulletins*, and draft resolutions and circulars.¹⁴ Of these, 118 appear in this book, divided into three chronological sections. The first, "Shachtman in the International," centers on Trotsky's correspondence with Shachtman on the ILO in 1930-31. The second, "The Fight," contains motions and documents on the central CLA disputes in 1932-33, from the international question to the feud over co-optations to the National Committee, disputes over the proletarianization of the New York local, CLA work among the miners in southern Illinois, and propaganda over the potential role of the Soviet Red Army in fighting Hitler's ascension to power in Germany. This section includes representative factional correspondence, as well as key documents and motions.

The final section, "The International Intervenes," begins in early 1933 and includes Trotsky's letters to CLA leaders, a transcript of his discussion with Arne Swabeck, motions from the International Secretariat, and responses to Trotsky from both sides. Despite the "Peace Treaty" adopted by the NC in June 1933, the factional flame continued to burn through the end of that year, as the two sides jockeyed for position over Cannon's proposal to move the national headquarters to Chicago. The projected move was shelved in late 1933, and the fight petered out by early 1934 as a new political configuration evolved in the CLA. Shachtman recounted these developments in his seminal 1936 document, "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?", a savage indictment of his former and future bloc partners, Abern and Glotzer.¹⁵

Twenty-five of the documents included in this book are available, in other translations, in the relevant volumes of *Writings of Leon Trotsky*, which provide the international context for the CLA's internal dispute. We publish here only four items also available in Cannon's *Writings and Speeches: The Communist League of America 1932-34*. Both Cannon's CLA writings and Cannon's *Writings and Speeches: The Left Opposition in the U.S. 1928-31* are essential companions to our collection, providing the broader national backdrop for the CLA struggle. *The Communist League of America* includes Cannon's two main documents from the internal struggle

and letters to his factional supporters that we do not reproduce here. We include eight items by Cannon, not available in the Pathfinder volume, that were circulated at the time with resident committee minutes and in bulletins of the CLA. Published here for the first time are seven letters by Trotsky and the documents of the Shachtman faction, centrally “Prospect and Retrospect.”

The Shachtman documents are replete with accusations against Cannon as an unrepentant Zinovievist and a bureaucratic maneuverer with little interest in Marxist theory or international questions. Revived in 1940, these accusations crop up in histories of American Trotskyism to the present day.¹⁶ The record of the dispute reveals how little basis these accusations have. Cannon was intimately familiar with the issues in dispute in the European ILO and deeply concerned with the education of the CLA membership in an internationalist spirit. As he wrote in hailing the first issue of the English-language *International Bulletin*, which the CLA in 1931 took responsibility for publishing:

All sections must steer a deliberate course toward real participation in the affairs of the others and in the common international tasks. This duty is particularly insistent for us because we inherit from the past a certain insularity and we are hampered by barriers of distance and language. All the more necessary, therefore, is a conscious struggle to surmount them.¹⁷

Cannon took this admonition to heart most of all for himself. As he wrote in his draft reply to “Prospect and Retrospect”:

I had to acquire internationalism. It took a long time. The process was a painful and difficult one, and very probably remains uncompleted. In this field I am still a seeker, a learner. It is very hard for an American to be a thoroughgoing internationalist in the genuine, not superficial, sense of the word. He is not born with this gift. The difficulties of distance, plus language handicaps, determined, and yet determine for me a slowness of orientation and a difficulty in quickly understanding international questions. (Example: The first stages of the struggle in the Russian party.)¹⁸

All leading CLAers—miseducated in the school of the degenerating Comintern—had much to learn from Trotsky, as the documents show. The process of basic Leninist education was a source for much of the early tension, as Cannon noted years later when he mused on the causes for the 1931–33 fight:

As we began to get the writings of Trotsky, it opened up a whole new world for us. And they [Abern and Shachtman] discovered, this is my assumption, that while they had always taken what I said for

gospel, they discovered there were a lot of things I didn't know. That I was just beginning to learn from Trotsky. What they didn't know was that I was learning as well as they were. Shachtman at least, I think, had the idea that he had outgrown me.¹⁹

In overcoming the CLA's unmerited factional polarization Cannon completed his education as a Leninist, learning to put program and principle qualitatively above organizational considerations. In later years Cannon recognized that it took Trotsky's guidance to break him from the bureaucratic factional practices of the degenerating Comintern:

When I came out of the nine years of the CP I was a first-class factional hoodlum. If not, how would I ever have survived? All I knew when somebody started a fight, let him have it. That existence was all I knew. I think Trotsky is right when he says that in the long drawn-out fight between Cannon and Abern that historical right is on the side of Cannon. But that doesn't mean I was right about everything. No, I was wrong about many things, including my methods and my impatience and rudeness with comrades and repulsing them. My past record—but that is years ago. I don't do that anymore. I don't insult comrades. I don't persecute them or give them grounds for thinking I am doing it. I know more about how to lead a party than that. I have had responsibilities on my shoulders and I have had the Old Man's instructions and some day I am going to publish the Old Man's correspondence on this question and it will be very illuminating as one of the great sources of my information and change. I improved myself, cleaned myself up, and you have got to judge me as I am today.²⁰

The resolution of the fight cemented Cannon's trust in Trotsky and his commitment to building a democratic-centralist international tendency. In contrast, Abern and Glotzer remained mired in the politics of cliquist gang warfare that had defined Zinoviev's Comintern. The "Abern Clique" was a fault line at the center of American Trotskyism, a remnant of the 1931-33 CLA fight, throughout the decade. In 1939-40 the fault ruptured and Shachtman rejoined his clique partners.²¹

The documents reveal the myriad tensions that can tear apart a small communist propaganda nucleus. How the CLA overcame the "dog days" to become one of the strongest sections of the Fourth International is an important lesson in the struggle to forge a revolutionary party and its cadre. The Prometheus Research Library, central reference archive of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, is unique in understanding the importance of the CLA fight and

making its history accessible to our own and future generations. The ICL, like the ILO, is a fighting communist propaganda group with the goal of forging parties of the proletarian vanguard to lead to victory new October Revolutions internationally.

The CLA's Origins in the CP's Cannon Faction

As a delegate to the Comintern Sixth Congress in 1928, Cannon, a founding leader of the American Communist Party, was won to Trotsky's fight to return the Soviet Communist Party and Communist International to the revolutionary internationalist program of Lenin's day. Cannon, as a member of the Program Commission, was given a partial copy of Trotsky's "The Draft Program of the Communist International: A Criticism of Fundamentals" (hereafter referred to as the Critique).²² Trotsky's powerful essay distilled the lessons of the international class struggle of the preceding years, in which the Communist International, initially under the leadership of Zinoviev and then of Bukharin-Stalin, zig-zagged between adventurism and the crassest opportunism. The abandonment of a revolutionary perspective bore its most terrible fruit in the Chinese Communist Party's subordination to the petty-bourgeois nationalist Guomindang, leading to the defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution of 1925-27.

Trotsky exposed the source of the Comintern's betrayals in the bureaucratic caste that had seized power from the Soviet proletariat in early 1924, defeating the Left Opposition and later that year generalizing its accommodation to the bourgeois order with Stalin's dogma of "socialism in one country." The Left Opposition fought a series of battles to maintain the Soviet Union as a bastion of world revolution, first in 1923-24 and then in alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev in the 1926-27 United Opposition, but Trotsky's Critique was the first programmatically comprehensive treatment of the corrosive effects on the Comintern of the conservative bureaucracy's hold on the Soviet party and state.²³

Already at an impasse in the factional warfare dominating the American Party in the 1920s, Cannon was electrified by Trotsky's document, which he described as "a searchlight in the fog of official propaganda, scholasticism and administrative decree which has been substituted for the ideological leadership of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in earlier years."²⁴ Cannon found an ally in Canadian party leader Maurice Spector,

a member of the Program Commission who had long been sympathetic to the Trotskyist Opposition.²⁵ Resolving to fight for Trotsky's views, they smuggled out of Moscow the partial copy of Trotsky's Critique. In New York, Cannon immediately won over his companion, Rose Karsner, as well as two of his key lieutenants, Abern and Shachtman.

Cannon, Shachtman, and Abern were expelled from the CP in October 1928; in *History of American Trotskyism* Cannon recounts that the self-serving hacks in the Lovestone Party leadership labeled them the "Three Generals Without an Army." This description downplays the support in the Party for the expelled Trotskyists. Cannon had been the coleader—along with William F. (Bill) Dunne—of the smallest of the CP's three established factions. The Cannon group split over Cannon's adherence to the Left Opposition. Bill Dunne, at the time on foreign assignment for the Comintern, chose the security of his Party membership over revolutionary program and principle. So did prominent Cannon faction members such as Manuel Gomez, leader of the Anti-Imperialist League, and William Schneiderman, a leader of the Young Communist League and later district organizer of the California CP. However, some 150 Cannon faction members were expelled simply for questioning Cannon's expulsion. The majority declared for Trotsky after reading his Critique, joining the CLA at its founding in May 1929.

Among the League's initial members was Arne Swabeck, like Cannon and Abern a full member of the CP Central Executive Committee (Shachtman was an alternate). A former editor of the SP's Scandinavian weekly paper and a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) from 1918 to 1920, Swabeck had been a leader of the 1919 Seattle general strike. A founding American Communist, he served as a delegate to the Comintern Fourth Congress in 1922. An SP member from 1908, Rose Karsner was the secretary of Max Eastman's journal *Masses* during World War I. She was also a founding Communist and, like Abern and Shachtman, a central administrator of the International Labor Defense (ILD), the CP-initiated united-front defense organization, headed by Cannon, that led the great campaign against the execution of the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927.

Most of the Minneapolis CP branch leaders—each one with more than two decades of experience as workers leaders—came

over to the CLA. This included Bill Dunne's brothers, Miles and Vincent, as well as Carl Skoglund and Oscar Coover. Vince Dunne was a founding member of the IWW and an itinerant Wobbly organizer in the western U.S. from 1906–08. Active thereafter in the Minneapolis labor movement, he joined the Communist Party in 1920. Skoglund joined the Socialist youth in his native Sweden in 1905 and participated as a young draftee in its antimilitarist activity. Blacklisted after leading a 1909 mill strike, he emigrated to the U.S. in 1911, where he joined the SP in 1914 and the IWW in 1917. He was a leader of the SP's Scandinavian Federation, an early supporter of the Bolshevik Revolution, and a founding American Communist. A railway mechanic, he was chairman of the local strike committee during the 1922 railway strike and was thereafter blacklisted from the industry. Coover was a leader of the 1922 railway strike along with Skoglund, and also a founding American Communist.

Attending the first CLA conference was Hugo Oehler, one of the CP's best trade-union field operatives and former organizer of District 10—headquartered in Kansas City and encompassing ten western states, including Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico. Oehler was a secret Trotskyist: He remained officially a member of the CP until June 1930 and was a leader, along with Bill Dunne, of the explosive textile strike in Gastonia, North Carolina in 1929. Louis Basky, leader of a group of Hungarians independently won to Trotsky's views, veteran of the 1919 Hungarian Revolution, and long-time leader of the American Party's Hungarian Federation, also joined the CLA. Dr. Antoinette Konikow, member of the Russian Socialist movement in exile from 1888, founding member of the SP and the American Communist movement, and pioneer of birth control in the United States, adhered to the League with a small group she had recruited in Boston.

The CLA's new National Committee included the majority of the founding leaders of the American Communist youth group—Abern, Shachtman, John Edwards, and Oliver Carlson.²⁶ Joining them on the CLA NC was Albert Glotzer, who was in 1928 a full member of the National Executive Committee of the Young Communist League (YCL). Glotzer had risen rapidly to leadership in the YCL's Chicago organization after joining in 1923 at the age of 15. Joseph Friedman (later known as Joseph Carter) was another Communist youth leader who joined the CLA. A leader of the

Socialist Party's New York youth, he had recently come over to the Communists.

Six of the seven members of the National Committee elected at the CLA's First National Conference in May 1929 were veterans of the "Cannon group"; the seventh was Maurice Spector, a member of the Canadian CP's Political Committee as well as of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), who was expelled from the Canadian party with some 30 others in late 1928. The Canadian comrades were initially organized as the Toronto branch of the CLA; later a Montreal branch was also organized. In late 1934 the Canadian Trotskyists formed a separate national organization.

The creation of the CLA from an established group within the Communist Party, with a history of collective work, gave it an organizational stability lacking in most Trotskyist groups internationally. The only other comparably organized group to come over as a whole to the ILO was Eduard Van Overstraeten's in Belgium. A leading opponent of World War I and a founding Belgian Communist, Van Overstraeten headed a faction in the Belgian party that also predated the development of the Left Opposition. Over one-third of the Belgian party went with him when he was expelled in early 1928 for supporting the Russian United Opposition; Cannon brought over a much smaller proportion of the American Party.²⁷ But Van Overstraeten had been trained in Zinoviev's maneuverist school of politics. He disagreed with Trotsky on the fundamental issue of military defense of the USSR in the Chinese Eastern Railroad dispute and deserted the ILO in 1930 while his organization splintered. Part of it—the Charleroi Federation led by Léon Lesoil—became the Belgian section of the ILO. Deeply rooted among the miners, the Belgian section was the most proletarian of the early European Trotskyist organizations.

Expelled en masse in late 1926, Zinoviev's supporters in the German party, led by Hugo Urbahns, Ruth Fischer, and Arkadi Maslow, founded the Leninbund, which adhered briefly to the ILO in 1929.²⁸ Writing off the Communist International and the Soviet Union itself as "state capitalist," the Leninbund lasted less than a year in the ILO. The small group led by Josef Frey, a founder of the Austrian Communist Party, remained mired in cliquist maneuverism and was never recognized as an ILO section. Henricus Sneevliet, a founder of both the Socialist and Communist move-

ments in the Dutch East Indies, as well as a founding Dutch Communist, was expelled from the Dutch party with a group of supporters in 1929. But his Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) stood apart from the International Left Opposition, adhering to the Trotskyist movement only later, from 1933–38. Even then the RSP maintained its membership in the centrist London Bureau, which it retained after the break with Trotsky in 1938.

Andrés Nin in Spain, Alfred Rosmer in France, and Chen Duxiu in China were won to the Left Opposition on a firmer programmatic basis. Nin and Rosmer, like Cannon, had long pre-Communist histories as revolutionary syndicalists. But Nin had lived for years in the USSR and lost his direct connection to the Spanish party. Rosmer was expelled from the French party in December 1924, before the issues in dispute in the Russian party were clear internationally. The founder and preeminent leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen followed Moscow's orders, despite misgivings, implementing the disastrous policy of class-collaboration that led to the crushing of the Second Chinese Revolution. After the disaster, he was made the scapegoat for Stalin's policy. He brought only a few close followers into the ILO, and many of the Chinese section's young recruits unjustly questioned his leadership from the beginning.²⁹

Cannon is distinguished from other early leaders of ILO sections not only by the number of supporters won to the ILO, but by the fact that he *stayed the course*, becoming a leader of the Fourth International when it was founded in 1938. The most capable Leninist the United States has yet produced, Cannon was the leader of the SWP through World War II and after, going to jail for the party's opposition to the imperialist war and leading the struggle, however belated and partial, against the Pabloite revisionism that destroyed the Fourth International in 1951–53. He remained the SWP's national chairman through the party's degeneration into reformism in the 1960s until his death in 1974.³⁰

Rosmer, unable to function as a leader of a small propaganda group, deserted the ILO in 1930. Nin, whose group of Spanish Bolshevik-Leninists had an increasingly attenuated relationship to the ILO, split in 1935.³¹ Chen was arrested in late 1932 and spent the next six years in Chiang Kai-shek's prisons, unable to play much of a role in the internal disputes of the ILO. He broke with the Fourth International in the prelude to World War II,

advocating support for the “democratic” imperialists against Nazi Germany.³² Outside of the Russian Opposition, Cannon was the only one of all the former Communist leaders who was able to achieve the revolutionary programmatic intransigence necessary for the Leninist proletarian vanguard.

Left Opposition vs. Right Opposition

Trotsky's Critique was effectively the founding document of the International Left Opposition. But in early 1929 the Critique was just beginning to be circulated internationally; it had been published only in French in Maurice Paz's journal, *Contre le courant*, and in English (in partial form) in the *Militant*. Other documents of the Russian Opposition were hardly available even in the Soviet Union. The Platform of the United Opposition, written for the 15th Party Congress in fall 1927, was banned as “anti-party” and circulated only clandestinely. Max Eastman had obtained a copy, which he published in his 1928 *The Real Situation in Russia*, along with Trotsky's October 1927 “Letter to the Bureau of Party History.”³³ Thus some basic documents of the Russian struggle were available in English. Eastman donated the royalties from the book to help produce the *Militant*.

The issue of Soviet domestic economic policy came to the fore in 1929. Opposing the economic autarky that underlay the dogma of “socialism in one country,” the Left Opposition had insisted that the gains of the revolution could only be defended in the long term through its extension to the advanced industrial countries. But in the meantime they sought to build the Soviet state and economy as key resources in the fight for world revolution. The Left Opposition fought for a planned rate of industrialization so that the social fabric necessary for a proletarian dictatorship could be rebuilt after the devastation of World War I and the Civil War. They sought to maintain the “smychka” (link between workers and peasants) through the production of manufactured goods for the peasantry. During the period of the United Opposition, they fought for higher workers' wages, financing industrialization through higher tax rates for the kulaks (well-off peasants who hired labor), and for incentives to foster voluntary collectivization among the poorer peasants.

In contrast, the ruling Soviet faction under Stalin, then in a bloc with Nikolai Bukharin, followed the policy of increasing concessions to the kulaks and petty traders created by the 1921 New

Economic Policy (NEP). Bukharin and his school of “red professors” were the most vocal advocates of these concessions, with Bukharin calling on the kulaks to “enrich” themselves. Mikhail Tomsky—the head of the Soviet trade unions—stood with Bukharin. Trotsky saw the bloc between Stalin’s centrist group, based on the party and state apparatus, and the rightists around Bukharin and Tomsky, as unstable. Social support for Bukharin’s neo-Narodnik agrarianism was to be found among the kulaks and NEPmen. Trotsky predicted disaster as the grain surpluses at the disposal of the hostile kulak forces continued to grow. Indeed, the kulaks began to withhold grain from the Soviet cities in late 1927. By 1928 the shortage in grain collections portended urban famine and threatened the very foundations of the workers state.

By spring 1928 the Stalinist faction, fearing for the future of the Soviet state, had embarked on an anti-kulak turn. In early 1929 this became a full-scale political about-face, accompanied by an open assault on the Bukharinite right. The Stalinists’ hasty and brutal forced collectivization of the peasantry and initiation of a five-year plan for industrialization foreclosed the immediate threat of capitalist restoration in the USSR. In order to bring international policy in line with the domestic left turn (and to undercut the Left Opposition), the Communist International, now unambiguously under the control of Stalin, promulgated a Third Period of post-1917 capitalism in which proletarian revolution was declared to be imminent more or less everywhere.

By the end of 1929 the Right Opposition (RO) leaders had all capitulated. Bukharin remained a member of the Soviet party Central Committee, but his supporters in other sections of the Comintern (including Jay Lovestone, M.N. Roy, Heinrich Brandler, and Joaquín Maurín) were expelled as the CI embarked on an ultra-leftist and sectarian course. The Stalinist parties abandoned the established trade unions to reformist leadership in order to build their own “revolutionary” unions. They opposed joint actions with parties of the Second International, which were labeled “social fascists.” Third Period ultraleft rhetoric and bureaucratic adventurism tended to assuage the doubts of Communist militants formerly sympathetic to Trotsky’s criticisms of the CI’s growing opportunism, undercutting the ILO’s recruitment. The Third Period remained the policy of the centrist Comintern leadership throughout the period covered by this book. The subsequent turn

to open class collaborationism with “democratic” imperialism culminated in 1935 with the CI’s adoption of the policy of the “Popular Front” with which Stalinism is generally identified today.

Heinrich Brandler, the vacillating head of the German party during the aborted revolution of 1923, became the leading international spokesman of the Right Opposition. The Right too opposed the Stalinist Comintern leadership, but from an evolving *reformist* perspective that was to lead most of its supporters to the Social Democracy—if not to outright capitalist reaction—before the decade was out. Given Bukharin’s capitulation, the RO supported Stalin’s domestic Soviet leadership, including the persecution of the Left Opposition. The RO’s American organization was the Communist Party (Opposition), headed by the unprincipled adventurer Jay Lovestone, who, as leader of the official CP, had expelled Cannon and the other founding Trotskyists. Lovestone ended the decade as a shameless backer of U.S. imperialism’s entry into World War II. This was but the prelude to his postwar role as a braintruster for the anti-Communist machinations of the American CIA in the international labor movement.

Trotsky correctly viewed the Soviet Right Opposition as a bridge within the party to the openly counterrevolutionary elements—including kulaks, NEPmen, would-be exploiters, and residual tsarist elements in the state apparatus—who were the only social base of support for the RO’s economic policies. Internationally, it was clear that a *political divide* separated the Bolshevik-Leninists from the multiple capitulators of the RO, who also regarded themselves as unjustly expelled from the CI. Trotsky had been willing to include the Bukharinites in negotiations for the reestablishment of Soviet party democracy when it appeared that dissension with the Stalinist left turn opened up that possibility in 1928. He remained ready to include the RO if the possibility of such negotiations appeared in the future. But his aim was to lay the basis for the RO’s conscious elimination from the proletarian vanguard: “The purge from the party of real opportunists, to say nothing of the Thermidorians, must be carried out freely and openly, by the will of the party masses.”³⁴ He adamantly refused to merge political banners with the Brandlerites in a fight against Stalinism:

We Bolshevik-Leninists never looked upon party democracy as free entry for Thermidorian views and tendencies; on the contrary, party democracy was trampled underfoot in the promotion of the latter.

What we mean by the restoration of party democracy is that the real revolutionary proletarian core of the party win the right to curb the bureaucracy and to really purge the party: to purge the party of the Thermidorians in principle as well as their unprincipled and careerist cohorts.³⁵

This was also Trotsky's position toward other rightist oppositional elements that emerged from the Soviet party in 1931–32:

It is true that the slogan "Down with Stalin" is very popular right now not only inside the party but also far beyond its perimeters. In this one can see the advantage of the slogan, but at the same time, undoubtedly, also its danger. To assume a protective coloring and politically dissolve into the general dissatisfaction with the Stalinist regime is something we cannot, we will not, and we must not do.³⁶

Political Differentiation in the Early ILO

Many dissident Communist elements who sought to regroup under the ILO's banner did not fully grasp the significance of the struggle in the Russian party. All were attracted to the Left Opposition's struggle against bureaucratism in the Soviet party and state. But many saw this as a simple "democratic" issue, misunderstanding or disagreeing with the underlying programmatic basis—the fight to forge the politically homogenous revolutionary proletarian vanguard in opposition to all varieties of centrism and reformism. Political softness toward the Right Opposition was common. Trotsky laid out the general problem:

It is the task of the Left Opposition to reestablish the thread of historic continuity in Marxist theory and policies. However, the different groups of the Left Opposition in the various countries arose under the influence of the most diverse national, provincial, and purely personal factors, and have often, cloaked in the banner of Leninism, brought up their cadres in a completely different and sometimes even in a contrary spirit.

We must not shut our eyes to the facts. We must openly say: many opposition groups and groupings represent a caricature of the official party. They possess all its vices, often in an exaggerated form, but not its virtues, which are conditioned by the numerical strength of the workers within them alone, if by nothing else.³⁷

Trotsky's primary task was the systematic education of the ILO cadre and the weeding out of opportunist, sectarian, accidental, and dilettantish elements. This entailed almost constant internal political struggle.

The first major fight Trotsky waged in exile was over the duty of the international proletariat to defend the gains of the Russian Revolution. In 1929, when Chiang Kai-shek tried to break China's treaty with the Soviet Union and seize the Chinese Eastern Railroad, the Leninbund, along with Van Overstraeten and a small group of French syndicalists then adhering to the ILO, refused to take a clear stand in defense of the world's first workers state.³⁸ Generalizing his refusal to defend the USSR, Urbahns, leader of the Leninbund, adopted the "theory" that the bureaucratized Soviet state represented not the dictatorship of the proletariat but a new form of "state capitalism." In late 1929, with Urbahns threatening to expel them, Trotsky's supporters left the Leninbund. The ILO's German section, the German United Left Opposition of the KPD (hereafter referred to as the German United Opposition), was formed in April 1930 through a merger of the former Leninbund minority with the so-called "Wedding Opposition," a dissident leftist current within the KPD whose leaders had been expelled in February 1928 for meeting with Left Opposition leader Christian Rakovsky.

The fight with Van Overstraeten continued through fall 1930, with the issue of Soviet defensism intersecting the interlinked question of the ILO's orientation as an expelled faction of the Comintern. Van Overstraeten's Belgian majority not only termed the USSR "imperialist" for its retention of the Chinese Eastern Railroad, it also wrote off the entire Communist International, arguing it was dead as a revolutionary force and that the Left Opposition should fight for the creation of a new party and international.

Trotsky had originally considered Belgium an exception to the Opposition's general orientation as an expelled Comintern faction, believing the official party to be insignificant there. In October 1929 he wrote, "The Belgian Opposition can and must aim to become an independent party. Its task is to win over the proletarian nucleus, not of the Communist Party, but of the social democracy."³⁹

Yet Trotsky fought hard against Van Overstraeten's attempt to write off the Communist International as a whole. With the Stalinists still claiming to stand on the program of the Russian Revolution, the CI organized the overwhelming majority of revolutionary-minded workers. The ILO's orientation as an expelled

faction, critically supporting the party's electoral and other campaigns, was necessary to a serious proletarian perspective. Lesoil's Charleroi Federation united with a small group led by Georges Vereeken in Brussels to defend the ILO's orientation, and split with Van Overstraeten in October 1930 to become the official ILO section in Belgium.⁴⁰

The fight over the Chinese Eastern Railroad is briefly touched on in the documents. Of greater centrality is Trotsky's ongoing battle with Andrés Nin and the Spanish Opposition, beginning with Nin's release from the USSR in late 1930. Nin insisted, "In Spain the proletariat will organize its party outside the official party (which does not exist in fact), and in spite of it."⁴¹ Nin's *Opposición Comunista de España* (OCE) oriented instead to the former Catalan Federation of the Spanish Communist Party led by Joaquín Maurín. Expelled from the CI in June 1930, the Catalan Federation was a rightward-moving centrist organization defined by its capitulation to petty-bourgeois Catalan nationalism. Trotsky characterized its politics as a "mixture of petty-bourgeois prejudices, ignorance, provincial 'science,' and political crookedness."⁴² In March 1931 Maurín's Catalan Federation founded a "mass" organization called the Workers and Peasants Bloc (BOC) which was, in Catalonia at least, far larger than the Communist Party.

The BOC, affiliated with the Right Opposition, refused to condemn the Stalinist leadership of the Communist International. Trotskyists were officially banned from membership. Thus Nin's insistence on seeking unity with the BOC—while ignoring the official Spanish Communist Party—contradicted the very political foundations of the ILO. From the fall of the monarchy in early 1931, Spain was in the midst of a prerevolutionary crisis in which even a small nucleus, armed with a revolutionary program and acting independently of Maurín's centrist swamp, could have grown exponentially. Trotsky wrote endless letters trying and failing to convince Nin of his criminally wrong course.⁴³ As the documents reveal, Nin briefly found support in early 1931 from other sectors of the ILO, including the international secretary, M. Mill. Further distancing itself from the ILO, the Spanish Opposition changed its name to *Izquierda Comunista de España* (ICE) in March 1932, in implicit solidarity with the *Gauche Communiste* trade-union opportunists who had split from the Trotskyist movement in France.

The fight on the trade-union question in France features heavily in the correspondence between Trotsky and Shachtman that opens this collection. The Ligue Communiste de France (the Ligue) was founded in April 1930 through the fusion of a number of disparate groups supporting Trotsky in France. Even before the Ligue was founded, Alfred Rosmer had met with the rightward-moving centrist elements in the leadership of the teachers union, themselves recently expelled from the Communist Party, and decided upon the formation of a new opposition group within the Communist-led trade-union federation, the Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire (CGTU). The Opposition Unitaire (OU, Unitary Opposition) was promoted with great fanfare in the pages of the French Trotskyist paper, *La Vérité*, which published its program, an opportunist mishmash that catered to lingering syndicalist prejudices within the CGTU, without a word of criticism. Trotsky strongly objected to the Ligue's perspective of subordinating its activity among the proletariat to an ongoing bloc with nonrevolutionary elements. Pierre Gourget countered with the old syndicalist argument against party "control" of the trade unions.⁴⁴

Within the Ligue, Raymond Molinier led the fight for Trotsky's position against Pierre Naville, Pierre Gourget, and Rosmer. Apparently piqued over Trotsky's support to Molinier, Rosmer withdrew from the Ligue in late 1930. Molinier's remaining opponents, led by Gourget and Naville, sought to obscure the *programmatic* difference between themselves and Molinier on the trade-union question with accusations against Molinier's allegedly shady business dealings as the head of a debt collection agency. When Molinier's faction won a majority in the Ligue in early 1931, Gourget and a group of supporters split from the Ligue and began publishing a journal, *Bulletin de la Gauche communiste*, on which Rosmer also collaborated.⁴⁵ Rosmer subsequently visited Spain, attempting to poison the Spanish Opposition against Molinier.

Naville remained a member of the Ligue and continued the anti-Molinier machinations within it. He was aligned with Kurt Landau in Germany. The founder and ideological inspirer of the Austrian Mahnruf Group, Landau had moved to Berlin and propelled himself into leadership of the German United Opposition when it was founded in early 1930. An unprincipled cliquist and adventurer, Landau's unserious approach to the struggle for

programmatic clarity can be judged by Trotsky's condemnation of the Mahnruf Group:

During the last two years, in the course of which I have had an opportunity to observe this group through its press and through correspondence with its representatives, the group has passed through the following evolution: (1) at first it swore movingly in the name of the Russian Opposition; (2) then it declared unexpectedly that it would not join any international faction; (3) then it made the attempt to unite all the groups, including the Rights; (4) following this it dissolved its bloc with the Brandlerites and swore, anew, loyalty to the International Left; (5) later on it adopted—to bring about unification, so to speak, but in reality for self-preservation—a platform in the spirit of Comrade Landau; (6) next it rejected the platform of Comrade Landau and adopted the capitulationist platform of Comrade Graef; (7) finally it split off from Graef and declared itself once more to stand on the platform of the International Left.⁴⁶

In a detailed exposure of Landau, Jan Frankel, Trotsky's secretary, wrote, "He appears completely beyond reproach as long as it is a matter of repeating general formulas that do not immediately affect the political activity of the individual and his group or obligate them. The difficulties and disagreements begin only at the moment that it becomes a matter of getting to the real core of these questions and implementing them."⁴⁷ Landau's organizational methods consisted of unprincipled maneuvering and draconian expulsions, designed to cement his role as unchallenged "leader" of the German organization. Although a member of the ILO's International Bureau, Landau refused to take a position against the trade-union opportunists in France, seeking to protect his friend and ally, Naville. He organized a conference of the German group in October 1930 that was solely occupied with personal and organizational squabbles—this just after Reichstag elections where the Nazis' votes jumped to over 18 percent of the total.

In early 1931, after months of fruitless attempts to educate Landau through personal letters, Trotsky brought the fight against him into the ILO with a devastating attack, "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition." At the time Landau was threatening to expel the Leipzig (Saxony) branch, led by Roman Well and A. Senin (later unmasked as Stalinist agents). Trotsky called for the reinstatement of the unjustly expelled German comrades, the organization of a democratic discussion within the section to be moderated by the International Secretariat, and the convening of

a politically prepared German conference. Landau quit the Opposition rather than comply.⁴⁸

Landau was typical of the dabblers, dilettantes, and adventurers seeking affiliation with the ILO in its early days. Boris Souvarine and Maurice Paz in France were even more dilettantish and distant from the working class. Josef Frey's Austrian group, which competed with Mahnruf for designation as the official ILO section (the international recognized neither) was cut from the same cloth. Trotsky later described the phenomenon as:

Individuals and little grouplets, predominantly of intellectual or semi-intellectual character, without clear political views and without roots in the working class. Accustomed neither to serious work nor to responsibility, closely tied up to nothing and nobody, political nomads without baggage, who carried some cheap formulas, smart critical phrases, and practice in intrigue from town to town and country to country.⁴⁹

Followers of the ultraleft Amadeo Bordiga, organized as Prometeo, worked with the ILO sections in Brussels and Paris (and briefly in New York). The Bordigists opposed the struggle for democratic demands, essential to a revolutionary proletarian perspective in the unfolding Spanish revolution. Opposing the united front in principle, they fought against Trotsky's urgent call for united actions of the Communist Party and Social Democrats to stop Hitler in Germany. Trotsky fought hard to win them to Leninism, but their ILO membership became increasingly untenable. In early 1930 three members of the Italian CP's Political Bureau in exile in Paris, including Pietro Tresso (Blasco) and Alfonso Leonetti (Souzo), declared for Trotsky and formed the New Italian Opposition (NOI) to distinguish themselves from the Bordigists. Under the influence of the NOI, a pro-Trotskyist faction crystallized within Prometeo. Trotsky's supporters, led by Nicola Di Bartolomeo, were expelled from Prometeo in 1931 after six months of discussion and joined forces with the NOI.⁵⁰ Prometeo was not invited to the February 1933 International Preconference that stabilized the ILO.

The numerous fights waged by Trotsky were detailed in documents circulated in all ILO sections; the most important documents were published in the *International Bulletin*, which contributed greatly to the education of the early Trotskyist cadre. Cannon cogently summarized the history of four years of struggle in outline notes for a speech to the CLA membership:

Early groups “supporting” Russian Opposition consisted primarily of elements alien to Bolshevism—party democracy, etc.

Right—1. Souvarine; 2. Van Overstraeten; 3. Lore, etc.; 4. Rosmer-Paz.

Ultraleft—1. Prometeo; 2. Fischer-Maslow-Urbahns.

Suppression of Russian Opposition worked to prevent an understanding of its platform.

Together with that—the tactics of the Russian Opposition—necessitated by special conditions—prevented clear understanding.

The real process of selection and differentiation began in 1929 with exile of Trotsky.⁵¹

The Fight to Forge an International Secretariat

The fights in the French, German, and Spanish sections intersected and overlapped with Trotsky’s ongoing struggle to forge an authoritative and centralized leading body for the ILO, which also figures heavily in the first section of this book, “Shachtman in the International.” The Provisional Committee of the Left Opposition established in Prinkipo in June 1929 mandated the publication of an international journal to “push forward the regroupment of communist workers by the study and discussion of the problems posed before the proletariat in every country.”⁵²

Prinkipo was far too out of the way for an international center and Trotsky’s precarious position in exile made a direct administrative role in the ILO untenable. At first Trotsky relied on Rosmer, the most prominent of the European Trotskyists, to conduct the work of international consolidation and expansion. But Rosmer did nothing to make the international center a reality and Trotsky began pushing for a more authoritative gathering of Opposition groups. This meeting was held in Paris in April 1930, soon after the founding conferences of the German United Opposition and the French Ligue.⁵³ Disabled by political disagreement and vacillations among the leading participants, the conference failed to issue a political manifesto, earning from Trotsky the bitter sobriquet “mute conference.” But the gathering did vote to form an International Bureau of representatives of the three most established European sections: the French, Russian, and German (both factions of the divided Belgian party refused to serve on the bureau and the CLA could not afford to keep a permanent representative in Europe). Leon Sedov (Trotsky’s son), Landau, and Rosmer (with Naville as his deputy) were appointed to serve

on the bureau, which was charged with the publication of a regular ILO discussion bulletin. The bureau was to be based in Paris, where the Ligue published a regular weekly, *La Vérité*.

Sedov, however, could not get a visa for France. Moreover, the conference made no arrangements for the bureau's technical work, leaving it dependent on the French Ligue, which was increasingly polarized between Rosmer-Naville and the group led by Molinier. The bureau barely functioned even in the period before Rosmer's defection in late 1930. The first issue of the *International Bulletin* (published in French) appeared only in late August 1930, and in the meantime Trotsky had to distribute his own international circulars to keep the Opposition sections informed of developments. In the first of these circulars Trotsky wrote:

The main reason for this loss of months, almost a year, in the formation of the international organization is, in my opinion, the lack of understanding that can be observed among a number of comrades about the reciprocal relationship between national and international organizations of the proletariat. Among certain elements in the Opposition the struggle against bureaucratic centralism has revived a non-Marxist conception of the reciprocal relationship between the national sections and the international organization, according to which the national sections are the foundation and walls and the international organization is the roof to be added at the end.⁵⁴

The Communist International had been established on the premise that, "In order to achieve permanent liaison and methodical leadership for the movement, the congress will have to create a common fighting body, a center of the Communist International, subordinating the interests of the movement in each country to the common interests of the revolution internationally."⁵⁵ Accordingly, in its statutes adopted at the Second Congress, the delegated world congress was established as the highest body of the revolutionary proletarian organization, whose decisions and those of its elected executive were binding on all sections. The ILO had to be built on the same internationalist premise. Given Trotsky's overwhelming political authority, his enforced physical separation from the ILO center lent a certain artificiality to any International Secretariat. While the technical and financial difficulties were real, the reticence to make the calling of an international conference a priority reflected continuing political differences in the ILO. These differences were also behind the resistance to Trotsky's attempts to create some semblance of an interim leading body.

In October 1930 Trotsky, Sedov, Frankel, Molinier, Naville, and Mill held a meeting in Prinkipo to deal with the disputes in the French Ligue. They also proposed a provisional arrangement for international functioning: the creation of a new Administrative Secretariat (A.S.), which was not to supersede the International Bureau elected at the April conference but to work under its direction.⁵⁶ The new secretariat was composed of Naville, M. Mill, and Souzo. Mill, a Ukrainian, a leader of the Paris Jewish Group, and fluent in Russian, was appointed by the Russian Opposition to work full-time as the international secretary.

The new secretariat sent a circular to all sections projecting “the convening of an early international conference as one of its most important tasks” and the holding of continental conferences as a preparatory measure. The most important job of the international conference would be the adoption of a “binding platform for all sections.”⁵⁷ It wasn’t until the Molinier faction won the majority in the Ligue in early 1931, replacing Naville with Pierre Frank as the Ligue’s representative on the A.S., that international functioning improved. The *International Bulletin* appeared regularly for the rest of the year, and minutes of secretariat meetings were circulated internationally.⁵⁸ But the projected international conferences did not occur. In mid-1931 Myrtos, a representative of the Greek Archio-Marxist organization that had recently adhered to the ILO, was added to the A.S.

A source of confusion rather than clarity, Mill proved unsuited to the task of political leadership. Continuing intrigues in the French Ligue brought the situation to a head. Molinier’s majority in the Ligue fell apart when he aligned with Albert Treint, a former CP leader and Zinovievist who joined the Trotskyists for a brief period in 1931. The Paris Jewish Group, under the direction of Mill and Felix, broke with Molinier and wrote sympathetically to Rosmer, whose trade-union policy they had recently opposed “in principle.” Outraged, Trotsky demanded that Mill be replaced and the secretariat reorganized, with the most important European sections each appointing a representative who would be responsible to his national organization.⁵⁹ In a deliberate slap in the face to Trotsky, the Spanish OCE demanded that Mill be reappointed to the I.S. as *its* representative.

The secretariat was reorganized and moved to Berlin, where Sedov had been living since early 1931.⁶⁰ The ILO international

center remained in Berlin for most of 1932, but its functioning was erratic, and few sets of I.S. minutes and bulletins from this period are available. A meeting of ILO representatives, held in Copenhagen in association with Trotsky's visit in November 1932, decided to hold an International Preconference of the ILO in Paris early in 1933 in preparation for a larger, representative conference later in the year. The preconference, held in Paris in February 1933, established a plenum of representatives of the Russian, Greek, German, Belgian, and French sections to replace the International Bureau as the authoritative leading body of the international between conferences.⁶¹ This plenum appointed a new International Secretariat as the administrative body in Paris. This I.S. intervened in spring 1933—at Trotsky's urging—to bring the CLA's factional struggle to an end.

Trotsky's fight to establish an authoritative international leading body continued throughout the decade, even after the founding of the Fourth International and the adoption of an international program in 1938.⁶² The extreme poverty of the early Trotskyist movement was a major hindrance, as was continuing political resistance and unclarity among Trotsky's supporters. The disruptive activities of the Stalinist secret police, the GPU, also played a role, although not the all-encompassing one insisted on by self-serving centrists such as Georges Vereeken.⁶³

The extent of the Stalinist penetration of the Trotskyist movement has never been fully revealed, but some facts are known. M. Mill returned to the Stalinist fold in late 1932; if he was not working with the GPU during his tenure as international secretary, he certainly worked with it afterward.⁶⁴ A few months later Well and Senin, Latvian-born brothers and leaders of the German section, also "defected," leading a fight that utterly disrupted the German Trotskyist organization on the eve of Hitler's appointment as chancellor. The brothers' real name was later revealed to be Sobolevicius. They were exposed as GPU operatives working under the name Soble or Soblen in the United States in the 1950s.

In February 1938 the Stalinists assassinated Sedov with the help of one "Etienne," aka Mark Zborowski, a Stalinist agent. Zborowski had earlier helped arrange the murder of Ignace Reiss, a decorated Soviet intelligence agent who declared for the Fourth International in 1937. Later in 1938 Rudolph Klement was murdered on the eve of the founding conference of the Fourth Inter-

national. Trotsky himself fell at the hands of a Stalinist assassin in 1940, but his death did not stop the Stalinist campaign of spying, disruption, and assassination aimed at the Fourth International. With the onset of World War II the Sobolevicius brothers set up shop in New York, where the headquarters of the Fourth International was transferred. Zborowski soon joined them. This GPU spy ring ran a series of agents in the SWP, including Cannon's secretary, Sylvia Cauldwell (Sylvia Franklin), as well as one Michael Cort (Floyd Cleveland Miller), who wormed his way into responsibility in the party's maritime fraction.⁶⁵ The GPU's persistent attempts to crush the movement that sought to continue the work of the revolutionary Communist International was not the least of Stalin's services to the imperialist world order.

Despite the shallow understanding, dilettantism, and cliquism of many of Trotsky's early supporters in Europe, and persecution by the Stalinist secret police, Trotsky was able to cohere a disciplined international organization of cothinkers, leading to the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938. This is testimony to the power of Trotsky's fight to preserve the internationalist program of the Bolshevik Party which led the Russian Revolution, a legacy on which proletarian revolutionaries must proudly stand today.

Shachtman's Role in the ILO

Shachtman was the first CLA leader to meet with Trotsky and other European Oppositionists. Delegated by the CLA National Committee, he went to Prinkipo in March 1930 to inquire about a subsidy for the weekly *Militant*, for which the CLA did not have sufficient financial resources. After a few weeks in Prinkipo, Shachtman went to Berlin with Naville to assist the founding conference of the German United Opposition; afterward he went to Paris to help organize the ILO's April conference.

While in Europe Shachtman worked closely with Naville, Rosmer, and Landau. In large part because of Shachtman and Naville's intervention, Landau was able to assume a leading role in the German United Opposition.⁶⁶ Shachtman brought to Paris a manifesto drafted by Trotsky for adoption by the ILO's April conference. Capitulating to Van Overstraeten's and Prometeo's political differences, Shachtman, Naville, and Rosmer decided not to present Trotsky's manifesto to the conference, to Trotsky's fury.

Shachtman later sought to explain:

I look back upon it now and can see more clearly that I should, nevertheless, have insisted upon the presentation of the manifesto, or declaration. But at the conference it seemed, not only to me, but to other comrades I spoke to (Rosmer, Naville), that to do this was extremely dubious. Nobody was in the least prepared for such an act. The ground had never been laid for it. The articles in *La Vérité* for weeks had said everything and suggested everything, except an international conference that would issue a principled statement (emphasis in original).⁶⁷

After Shachtman's return to the U.S., Landau and Naville were frequent contributors to the *Militant* on German and French issues.

Despite his co-optation to the International Bureau and Trotsky's patient letters explicating the political issues, Shachtman never made a declaration against Naville-Rosmer-Gourget on the trade-union question, nor did he attempt to get the CLA to do so. When Trotsky opened the fight against Landau's unprincipled cliquism in February 1931, Shachtman stood mute. His silence only encouraged Landau, who, as Trotsky noted, was banking on the support of both the French and American organizations.

After the A.S. wrote to the CLA to insist that Shachtman's intervention as a member of the International Bureau was urgent, the CLA resident committee took up the crisis in the German section. Their 27 April 1931 meeting was the scene of the first clash between Shachtman and Cannon on international questions. Shachtman's motion supported only Trotsky's operational proposals, reserving judgment on the political issues until more information was received. Cannon put forward a motion to send the letters by Trotsky and the A.S. on the Landau question to the CLA branches for discussion—the motion failed when Shachtman refused to support it.⁶⁸

Shachtman's demand for more information was merely a political cover for Landau. This became clear in late May 1931 when Landau split from the ILO, declaring his intention to form a new international. The minutes of the June 12 resident committee meeting reflect evident anger at Shachtman for withholding key Trotsky correspondence about Landau. The body passed two motions, one directing Swabeck as League secretary to write to Trotsky requesting that he address all official correspondence to the secretary, the other mandating the translation for NC members

of all Trotsky's letters (at the time Trotsky lacked an English-speaking secretary and usually wrote to the CLA in German).

The very next day Swabeck sent a letter to Trotsky and the A.S. promising a comprehensive CLA National Committee resolution to condemn not only Landau's "personal and national clique formations," but also "the wrong views and practices of the Gourget group in France, particularly in regard to the question of trade-union policies and tactics." The June 12 meeting was the venue for the second clash between Cannon and Shachtman on international questions; Cannon proposed the publication of the forthcoming resolution in the *Militant* in the name of the NC, while Shachtman wanted only an unsigned (hence less authoritative) *Militant* article. In the end, the committee adopted a compromise motion for a signed article embodying only the "conclusions" of the NC resolution. Shachtman delayed writing the mandated resolution until the eve of the CLA's Second National Conference in September.⁶⁹

After Landau's departure Trotsky observed in a letter to Shachtman that Naville "is staying in the Ligue in order to sabotage it from within and to help Landau set up a new international" ("You Bear Some Responsibility for Landau's Course," 23 May 1931). In July, under the direction of Naville, the Ligue's journal, *Lutte des classes*, published an article by Landau, prompting Trotsky to break relations with the journal.⁷⁰ Yet at the CLA conference, Shachtman's international report omitted the fight against Naville and the programmatic disputes with Prometeo. In the discussion period came the third clash between Cannon and Shachtman on international questions, when Cannon attacked Naville and noted that the Prometeo documents must be sent to the branches. His remarks were widely seen as a thinly veiled polemic against Shachtman. The rift widened when Cannon vehemently opposed Shachtman's proposal to add Lewit and Basky to the National Committee. The motion to enlarge the committee lost.⁷¹

After the convention Shachtman demanded a two-month vacation in order to travel again to Europe. Pique was undoubtedly a factor in Shachtman's plans to leave New York, but he wrote to Trotsky that he wanted to report for the *Militant* on the developing revolutionary situation in Spain, as well as aid in the formation of a Left Opposition group in England.⁷² The

documents show how Shachtman's actions in Europe in November-December 1931 brought Trotsky's dissatisfaction to a head, prompting Trotsky to write to the CLA National Committee and precipitating the factional struggle in the CLA. These documents explode the image of Shachtman as Trotsky's happy international commissar, a myth spread by Shachtman and his supporters in later years and more recently purveyed by Peter Drucker in his biography of Shachtman. In fact, Trotsky's opponents in Europe invoked Shachtman's name in defense of their own actions.⁷³

The Impasse of the CLA

The fight against Shachtman's conciliation of Naville, Mill, and Landau ignited the factional fire that burned in the CLA for the next two years. The documents reveal that personal tensions within the CLA leadership going back to 1929 fueled the fire. These tensions were rooted in the impasse in which the CLA found itself soon after it was founded.

In their first few months of existence the American Trotskyists recruited steadily from the Communist Party. For the most part the new members were former Cannon faction supporters who refused to endorse the initial expulsions, but there was also a trickle of former Foster faction supporters such as Joe Giganti. The Trotskyists expected to recruit more Foster faction supporters disaffected with the ascendancy of the despised adventurer and blatant opportunist Jay Lovestone to Party leadership.⁷⁴

Lovestone, however, failed to see the signs of the rift between Bukharin and Stalin, and broke too late with Bukharin, his principal friend and backer in Moscow. He was purged from the American leadership in May 1929, just after the CLA founding conference, and expelled from the Party in June. At first Cannon anticipated that Lovestone would take the majority of his faction with him, cohering a new party with the followers of Ludwig Lore and the right-wing CP Finnish Federation:

The appearance of a right communist, or rather left socialist, party is clearly indicated. And this in turn will only be a bridge toward the Socialist Party, toward incorporation within it as its left wing. The disruption of the Communist Party as we have known it, the decline of Communist influence, and the temporary revival of the Social Democracy as a factor in the labor movement, is now taking shape as an actual probability and not merely a speculation on future developments.

The banner of communism and the entire heritage of the American movement as a revolutionary factor will pass into the Opposition. The official party of Stalinist centrism, hammered mercilessly from the right and the left, will lose to both and depend for its existence more and more on subsidy and faith.⁷⁵

The Stalinist regime in the Comintern succeeded, however, in isolating Lovestone. Stalin's reported threat to Benjamin Gitlow and other Lovestoneites in Moscow, "When you get back to America, nobody will stay with you except your wives," was not much of an exaggeration.⁷⁶ Many of Lovestone's key lieutenants and most of his factional base remained in the CP; he was able to rally barely 200 members to his Communist Party (Opposition). As a concession to the sensibilities of the former Lovestoneites who remained loyal to Moscow, Foster was passed over for Party leadership. Earl Browder, an unexceptional former Foster lieutenant, emerged as Stalin's new choice for American leader. Browder had spent two years on assignment in the Far East for the Comintern in 1927-28, supporting every twist and turn of the CI's opportunist policy in China. Such foreign tours of duty were, at the time, required as proof of unquestioning loyalty to Moscow.

Thus the Communist Party retained its numerical strength and the allegiance of the majority of the class-conscious workers who identified with the Russian Revolution. After Lovestone's expulsion, Third Period ultraleftism came into its own in the American Party. The left turn effectively blocked further substantial recruitment to the CLA, as Shachtman later recounted:

Our first expectations for growth were centered around the prospects that we thought were in the offing among the rank-and-file Fosterites....How seriously many of them at that time took the heresy of Trotskyism can be judged by the fact that it was not at all unusual for a Fosterite rank-and-filer to reply to our agitation by saying, "Why did you have to go where you are now? Why couldn't you have stayed with us and continued the fight against the Lovestoneites?" And primarily our reply would be, "That's no road whatsoever. That's blocked off completely by the Comintern, by the Stalinists."

Then early in 1929—that is to say, not many months after we ourselves were expelled by the Lovestoneites and the Fosterites—came the new crisis in the Party which was far deeper so far as numbers are concerned than the smaller crisis that had been precipitated by our own expulsion from the Party....This created a most embarrassing situation for us, given the tactic that we were employing toward the members of the Party and given our perspective for the ulterior development of the Party. We could no longer speak of the Party

going further and further to the right. We could no longer speak of the Lovestoneites ruining the Party. We could no longer speak of the Fosterites having illusions that they would get the leadership of the Party. If anything resulted from that, it was a counteroffensive by the Fosterites—in the ranks, to be sure, unofficially, to be sure—to get us to return to the Party. They didn't succeed in convincing a single one of our people, but not even the possibility of success existed any longer for us in recruiting dissident Fosterites.⁷⁷

The Third Period was, in Cannon's words, a "devastating blow": "There were, I would say, perhaps hundreds of Communist Party members who had been leaning toward us, who...returned to Stalinism in the period of the ultraleft swing."⁷⁸ The Party's authority continued to grow due to the rapid growth of the Soviet industrial base under the first five-year plan, a sharp contrast to the capitalist world economy spiraling downward in the Great Depression. Moreover, the CP's Third Period street militancy and active fight against black oppression were attractive to young workers. The CP doubled its membership from 1930 to 1933, growing from 7,545 to 14,937.⁷⁹

When Lovestone was still its leader the Party had greeted the first public activities of the Trotskyists with an outburst of bloody gangsterism. Two *Militant* saleswomen were attacked outside New York Party headquarters in December 1928; subsequently public Trotskyist meetings in New York and Minneapolis were broken up, while the New York Hungarian Opposition group was attacked in its meeting hall by at least 50 Stalinists armed with brass knuckles, blackjacks, knives, clubs, and lead pipes.⁸⁰ After Lovestone's expulsion the attacks were more erratic. From the foundation of the CLA in May 1929 through late 1932 (when the CLA's propaganda for united-front action against the Nazis in Germany found some support in Party circles), the Trotskyists were frozen out *politically*. Effective propaganda produced a trickle of recruits from Communist-led organizations, especially the Young Communist League, but CLAers were rarely able to participate in Party-led struggles.⁸¹ They were generally denied membership in the Party's "mass" organizations such as the International Labor Defense, Soviet American Friendship Societies, and Unemployed Councils.⁸²

It is hard for Trotskyists today to fathom what it meant for the CLA members to be cut off from the movement of thousands of militant working people that had been their whole life. Cannon had been the Party's most popular public speaker, often address-

ing meetings of many hundreds of workers across the nation. Swabeck and Oehler had won authority as workers leaders in southern Illinois and elsewhere. Even younger Cannon faction members such as Abern and Shachtman had participated in the "Save the Union" opposition to John L. Lewis in the United Mine Workers through the ILD.⁸³ Now the CLA was thrown in on itself. The political isolation from the proletarian vanguard elements in the CP intersected the onset of the Great Depression in late 1929. Until 1933 class struggle in general was at a low ebb and the CLA was in the period of stagnation that Cannon dubbed "the dog days."

The Great Depression

The *Militant* went weekly in November 1929; the first weekly issue reported on the stock market crash. The ensuing global economic crisis led to a fall in industrial production of 48.7 percent in the United States between 1929 and 1933.⁸⁴ There were immediate mass layoffs in late 1929, but the crisis escalated over the next two years. The 5 million unemployed in September 1930 had increased to nearly 11 million by December 1931; by March 1933 there were over 15 million. Those laid-off were overwhelmingly unskilled and semiskilled workers in the urban areas, including many CLA members. Coal mining, already in decline, was one of the hardest hit industries; by 1931 starvation was reported in Franklin County in the southern Illinois coalfields, the one region where the CLA initially had a working-class following.

While wage rates for unionized workers who remained employed held steady for the first year of the Depression (due to pressure from the Hoover White House), wage slashing began in earnest in fall 1931. An across-the-board 15 percent decrease in hourly wages was standard, but since most people worked fewer hours, take-home pay fell still further. Total national income dropped by more than 50 percent from 1929 to 1932, from \$81 billion to \$39 billion. CLA members who maintained their jobs were earning less and had little to spare for the organization.

There was no money to pay the nominal wages due the national secretary and the *Militant* editor; the League was forced to resort to a revolving fund of comrades' rent money to pay bills. More than once in this period the CLA abandoned an office rather than pay the back rent; a telephone was an impossible luxury. The financial priority had to be the *Militant*, but this too was often

beyond the CLA's means and issues were missed. Press frequency was cut back to biweekly in July 1930, and weekly publication was not resumed for another year. Swabeck described how he financed activities through "floating checks": "A check would be made out under pressure from a creditor without sufficient funds in the bank to cover the amount. The check would bounce and thus provide a little additional time to cover the amount of the check that had bounced previously." The deaf-mute linotype operator "would regale the young comrades by his highly developed mimicry showing what he thought of my checks."⁸⁵ Swabeck was constantly scrounging for money to finance national tours, regional organizers, or international travel.

The devastated economy meant that there was little prospect of class struggle—those who retained jobs were too fearful of losing them. American Federation of Labor (AFL) membership, down from approximately 4 million in 1920 to just over 3.4 million in 1929, fell further to a low of barely more than 2.1 million in 1933. Strikes were already at a low point, averaging 914 per year in the last half of the 1920s; there were only 637 in 1930, 810 in 1931, and 841 in 1932. The ossified craft-union AFL leadership under William Green marched so much in tune with the capitalist class headed by Republican president Herbert Hoover that it even opposed unemployment insurance until July 1932.

In the 1932 national elections, overwhelming mass dissatisfaction with the Hoover administration was reflected in the landslide vote for his opponent, Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt. The AFL did not support Roosevelt; the labor bureaucracy formed its alliance with the Democratic Party during FDR's first term in office. The election returns indicated an incremental stirring of class consciousness in response to the Depression: Socialist Party candidate Norman Thomas received 918,000 votes, the Communist Party slate of William Z. Foster and James Ford—the first black vice-presidential candidate in United States history—received 102,991. Not since Eugene V. Debs' run for president in 1912 had there been a combined total of over one million votes for working-class candidates.⁸⁶

In early 1933 the class struggle began to pick up in the United States. There were 1,695 strikes reported in 1933; the upsurge began months before Roosevelt's National Recovery Act (NRA) recognized the right of workers to collectively organize. This

coincided with new political openings for the CLA among CP members, many of whom reacted with fear and horror at the failure of the German party to fight Hitler's ascension to power in January. Opportunities for the CLA to intervene in broader working-class milieus provided the backdrop for the end of the factional polarization that plagued the League during the dog days.

Cannon's Personal Crisis and Political Slump

The onset of the Depression and impasse of the CLA coincided with a personal crisis for Cannon that contributed to an evident period of political demoralization in 1929–30. In spring 1929 Cannon's first wife, Lista Makimson, died, leaving Cannon and Karsner with the responsibility for two teenage children who had previously been raised by Makimson, in addition to Karsner's daughter, Walta. These personal responsibilities weighed heavily on Cannon as the League was thrust into a period of stagnation. The Cannon family moved out to Long Island in the summer of 1929 and Karsner too underwent a period of personal withdrawal and ill health.⁸⁷

Cannon's need for a steady income was urgent, but, with every available penny poured into the *Militant*, the League could not afford to pay him. Through the good offices of Rose's ex-husband, journalist David Karsner, in August 1929 Cannon began to work for the circulation department of the *Herald Tribune*. Cannon was lucky to get the job and even luckier to keep it as the Depression hit. Nonetheless the Cannon-Karsner family lived in poverty throughout the early 1930s, even after young CLA member Sam Gordon joined the household to help pay the bills. Personal correspondence indicates that the family lived from hand to mouth, often enduring eviction notices and periods without electricity due to unpaid bills.⁸⁸ Cannon's binge drinking no doubt also contributed to family tensions during this period. Cannon told Sam Gordon that he drank "to get away from some insurmountable problem he didn't want to think about for a while."⁸⁹

Cannon had been editor of the *Militant* from its inception in November 1928; he became national secretary of the CLA at its first conference in May 1929. But in the period following the conference he was rarely in the office, nor did he attend branch meetings.⁹⁰ He wrote little for the *Militant*, publishing only three articles between mid-June and the first of the year. Over the

summer Cannon had a nasty blowout with Maurice Spector, and Spector left New York for Toronto vowing to remain in Canada permanently.⁹¹

Shachtman and Abern were left holding the fort, and this engendered much resentment, the subject of extensive personal correspondence beginning in fall 1929.⁹² After Cannon began working for the *Herald Tribune*, there was evidently a rearrangement in the division of labor; in October 1929 the *Militant* ceased listing Cannon as editor, publishing simply the names of the editorial board members: Abern, Cannon, Shachtman, Spector, and Swabeck. National Committee members outside New York were informed of the situation, and in December Arne Swabeck wrote urgently to Cannon from Chicago to inquire about the reasons for his withdrawal:

Your complete absence from all activities in our movement for a long time has become noticeable not only to such comrades as myself, who are able to keep our finger fairly close to the pulse, but by the comrades in general. Personally I have received several inquiries from several comrades in regard to it. I am speaking of complete absence because this is what it practically amounts to when one compares the past with the present....

Of course, I recall very clearly the extremely great personal difficulties you had to face when your children were left entirely in your care and I know from observation what great sacrifice it all meant on your part. Hence I thought, shortly after the change of staff had taken place and you retired so far to the background, a short relief for adjustments is quite in order. I found it reasonable as a matter of temporary—that is very temporary—arrangement. I realized, of course, that you would have to devote some time to relieve your mind of these responsibilities of a personal character. Now, however, I feel quite alarmed, noting that this retirement or absence of yours has become so complete and of such a permanent character.⁹³

The deterioration of personal relations between Abern/Shachtman and Cannon during this period had political and personal dimensions. The two younger men had little empathy for Cannon's problems. With working wives and without children they were in a better position to endure the hardship of working for the League without pay (both men also took occasional part-time jobs). Cannon later wrote, "If I had been dealing with grown-up people—in the personal as well as the rev[olutionary] sense—it could have been straightened out."⁹⁴ When Cannon requested that the League buy him a typewriter so he could write for the *Militant* at home, Abern indignantly refused.⁹⁵ Reflecting the rancor that lin-

gered for years afterward, Cannon wrote of “Personal difficulties which piled upon me and for a time overwhelmed me. This was the moment they seized to turn on me like treacherous curs.”⁹⁶

With little opportunity for the CLA to implement aspects of its working-class program, Cannon’s strengths as a proven working-class leader receded into the background. Moreover, the writings of Trotsky that all leaders of the CLA were now avidly reading clarified the political deficiencies of the old Cannon faction. Early issues of the *Militant* serialized “The Right Danger in the American Party,” the document that had been presented jointly to the CI Sixth Congress by the Cannon and Foster factions.⁹⁷ Its quirky mixture of Stalinist doublespeak and legitimate criticism of the opportunism of the Party under Lovestone’s leadership was painfully inadequate compared to Trotsky’s precise programmatic Critique.

At the First National Conference Cannon took two positions with which a number of CLA members disagreed: He insisted that the program include the call for a labor party in the United States, and he supported the demand for self-determination for the majority-black counties in the American South (the so-called “black belt”). After discussion, Cannon changed his opinion on both issues, but his initial positions were later raised by the Shachtman side in an attempt to discredit Cannon’s political leadership. However, it was Cannon’s opposition to the League’s attempts to publish the *Militant* as a weekly in 1929–30 that solidified Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer’s hostility to Cannon.

The Labor Party Slogan

The labor party slogan was a subject of dispute within the American Communist Party almost from its inception.⁹⁸ For most of the 1920s the Party called for a “farmer-labor” party, reflecting its orientation to the remnants of petty-bourgeois Progressivism embodied in the 1924 presidential campaign of the ex-Republican governor of Wisconsin, Robert M. La Follette. With its policy of the “third party alliance,” the early American CP came very close to supporting La Follette’s Farmer-Labor Party candidacy; it was Trotsky’s intervention in the Comintern in Moscow that pulled the CP back from this opportunist course. Under the tutelage of Zinoviev’s Comintern, however, the American Party continued to support the anti-Marxist call for a two-class “farmer-labor” party.

Trotsky’s exposition in the Critique of the opportunism

underlying the “farmer-labor” position was one of the arguments that won Cannon to the Left Opposition, as is evident from Cannon’s 1929 introduction to the CLA’s pamphlet version:

The formation of “farmer-labor” parties—that source of such exaggerated hopes and unbounded mistakes in the American Party—is reviewed at length in this volume. The underlying falsity of the whole idea of a “two-class” party is analyzed from the theoretical standpoint of Marxism and the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, and is condemned in principle—for the West as well as for the East. Trotsky’s comment on the “third party alliance” with La Follette, the fight against which was led by him, will be especially interesting to American Communists. All of which is a timely reminder of the heavy debt our Party owes to Trotsky.⁹⁹

The “Platform of the Communist Opposition,” the first central programmatic statement by the American Trotskyists, addressed to the CP’s Sixth Convention in February 1929 and subsequently adopted by the CLA’s First National Conference, rejected the call for a “farmer-labor” party. But it continued to support the labor party slogan: “The perspective of a labor party, as a primary step in the political development of the American workers, adopted by the Party in 1922 after a sharp struggle...holds good today.” Arne Swabeck explained, “All indications and historical experience indicate that the labor political reformist stage is quite unavoidable also in the United States, with possibilities of some form of a labor party; and that such must be our perspective.”¹⁰⁰

Shortly before the founding conference of the CLA, Glotzer raised objections to the idea that the American working class must necessarily go through a reformist stage. At the conference he was supported by John Edwards and others from Chicago. But the platform formulations on the labor party were adopted by the CLA with strong support from Cannon.¹⁰¹

Shachtman raised the labor party controversy during his first visit with Trotsky in Prinkipo in March 1930. Trotsky had reservations about the slogan and wrote that he needed to study the question.¹⁰² By the time of the Second National Conference in September 1931, the CLA had arrived at the evidently unanimous view, codified in the conference theses, that the labor party slogan should be dropped. Trotsky subsequently elaborated:

One can say that under the American conditions a labor party in the British sense would be a “progressive step,” and by recognizing this and stating so, we ourselves, even though indirectly, help to establish such a party. But that is precisely the reason I will never

assume the responsibility to affirm abstractly and dogmatically that the creation of a labor party would be a “progressive step” even in the United States, because I do not know under what circumstances, under what guidance, and for what purposes that party would be created. It seems to me more probable that especially in America, which does not possess any important traditions of independent political action by the working class (like Chartism in England, for example) and where the trade-union bureaucracy is more reactionary and corrupted than it was at the height of the British empire, the creation of a labor party could be provoked only by mighty revolutionary pressure from the working masses and by the growing threat of communism. It is absolutely clear that under these conditions the labor party would signify not a progressive step but a hindrance to the progressive evolution of the working class....

That the labor party can become an arena of successful struggle for us, and that the labor party, created as a barrier to communism, can under certain circumstances strengthen the Communist party, is true, but only under the condition that we consider the labor party not as “our” party but as an arena in which we are acting as an absolutely independent Communist party.¹⁰³

Trotsky’s largely conjunctural arguments were colored by the CLA view of the slogan as a call for a reformist party rather than as an algebraic and propagandistic call for the working class to break with the capitalist parties. At the time, the Lovestoneite Right Opposition was agitating for a “labor party,” which they represented as a bloc between themselves and the social-democratic trade-union bureaucracy *against* the Communist Party. It was out of the question that the CLA, as an expelled faction of the Party, would participate in such a formation.

As late as 1935, Shachtman was still mechanically extrapolating from the CP’s experience with La Follette’s farmer-labor movement:

In the battle between the revolutionary party and the third capitalist party for the support of the masses who are breaking away from the old bourgeois parties, the slogan of the “labor” party—or even the slogan of the “mass, class labor party” (whatever that is)—does not possess sufficient class vitality or distinction from the third party to make it possible to wean the masses away from the latter by means of it.¹⁰⁴

Thus Shachtman insisted that it is historically *impossible* for the American class struggle to generate a genuinely independent workers organization, moving toward communism and counterposed to the third bourgeois parties which typically arise in times of social unrest. At bottom, this is nothing but a statement of

historical pessimism about the revolutionary capacity of the American working class.

Shachtman and Abern had so much invested in their opposition to the labor party slogan—a key part of their challenge to Cannon’s leadership in the early CLA—that they refused to abandon it even when the conjuncture changed in the mid-1930s. The working-class upsurge that produced the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) posed the possibility that the American proletariat would break from the bourgeois parties. Precisely in order to head this off, the reformist trade-union leadership cemented an alliance with Roosevelt’s Democratic Party. Cannon noted a change already in 1934.¹⁰⁵ Yet only in 1938—at the insistence of Trotsky—did the American Trotskyists finally readopt the call for a labor party.¹⁰⁶ Even then 40 percent of the organization voted against the slogan.¹⁰⁷ Thus the American Trotskyists in the trade unions from 1934–37 had no programmatic demand that counterposed the need for the political independence of the working class to the procapitalist politics of the anti-Stalinist progressives with whom they were allied. This weakness is but one of the ways that the first Cannon-Shachtman fight reverberated in the Trotskyist movement for the entire decade.

The CLA and the Fight Against Black Oppression

The capitalist social structure of the United States is profoundly shaped by the legacy of black chattel slavery. It took a bloody Civil War, which was also a bourgeois social revolution, to eliminate the slave system. The American labor movement did not begin to organize until after the Civil War, and within it the fight for black rights has always sharply drawn the line between revolution and reform. The early Socialist Party included open racists among its leaders. Later, the antiracist Eugene V. Debs represented the best of the SP. Yet he still insisted, “We have nothing special to offer the Negro, and we cannot make separate appeals to all the races.”¹⁰⁸ Following World War I and the Russian Revolution, the cadre of the American Communist Party emerged from the class-struggle, antiwar, left wing of the SP—which was pretty much antiracist—and from the revolutionary syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW fought the Jim Crow craft unionism of the AFL, sometimes organizing across race lines. But neither the IWW nor the old SP left wing ever transcended the simplistic

approach of “black and white, unite and fight.” It was the Russian Bolsheviks, whose party had been forged in battle against Great Russian chauvinism in the tsarist empire, who taught the American Communists that the party must develop special demands and special methods for work among the black population, and that the struggle for black emancipation was a powerful motive force for proletarian revolution.¹⁰⁹

The fight for black rights took on even more urgency with the black migration to northern cities during World War I, creating a key black component of the industrial working class. Throughout the 1920s the Comintern fought to get the American Party to make the struggle against racial oppression central to its work. In 1928 the Comintern’s bureaucratic degeneration intruded into this struggle. Under Stalin’s direct tutelage as part of the Third Period turn, the American Party was forced to adopt the view that black oppression in the United States was a national question, expressed in the demand for “self-determination” for the “black belt.” Cannon was won to this position by the discussion at the Sixth Congress, where he participated in the commission on the “Negro question” (as it was then called). The “Platform of the Communist Opposition” endorsed the demand for self-determination. As in the case of the labor party slogan, it was Glotzer who raised objections shortly before the CLA’s founding conference. The demand was correctly dropped from the platform.¹¹⁰

In Trotsky’s first letter to his American supporters he inquired, “Is there some connection with the Negroes? Is somebody especially appointed for the work among them?”¹¹¹ After the CLA’s conference, Cannon replied:

Unfortunately we have no connection yet among the Negroes. All our efforts to win at least one of the Negro comrades in the Party to our side failed. We recognize the great importance of this question for the future and shall not cease our efforts to make a beginning in this field. On this question we had a big discussion at our conference over the section of our platform in which we advocate the slogan of the right of self-determination for the Negroes. This position was adopted by the Party at the direction of the ECCI, but it met with strong opposition there from many of the Negro comrades. There are big sections of the southern part of the United States where the Negro population is the majority and where they are now deprived of political and other rights more flagrantly than in the North. It was decided to conduct a discussion on this whole question in our ranks, and the National Committee decided to ask

your opinion about the appropriateness of this slogan of the right of self-determination for the Negroes.¹¹²

We can find no record that Trotsky replied directly to Cannon's question, but he probably made his inclination to support the CP's self-determination line known when Shachtman visited Prinkipo in March 1930. In any case debate continued within the CLA. In 1930 two discussion articles in the *Militant* opposed the "self-determination" slogan, upholding instead the call for full social, political, and economic equality.¹¹³ The question was scheduled for discussion at the CLA's Second National Conference in September 1931, but it was dropped from the agenda when the conference went over schedule. Swabeck reported in the *Militant*:

While a general consensus of opinion exists within our ranks of deep skepticism in regard to the correctness of this slogan [self-determination for the black belt], the conference accepted the National Committee on this question. It decided to instruct the National Committee to create a commission which is to make an exhaustive study of this problem in such a way that when a policy is finally arrived at it can be fully motivated and definitely based on Marxian conclusions.¹¹⁴

Hugo Oehler was a member of the CLA Negro Commission. As a CP field organizer he helped lead the 1929 textile strike in Gastonia, North Carolina, working as a team with Bill Dunne. The CP sought to link the strike to the fight against the Southern Jim Crow system, organizing black and white workers into the same union. The strike exploded into a major class battle, and it was smashed with the full force of racist lynch-law reaction. Drawing lessons from this experience, in 1932 Oehler published in the *Militant* "The Negro and the Class Struggle" and concluded: "The program of the Communists (Marxists) is the only one possible for the American Negro for social, political, and economic equality and freedom. The road is the road of class struggle."¹¹⁵ CLA propaganda on the Scottsboro case centered on demands for full social and political equality, dropping the call for self-determination. Cannon was won to an integrationist line, as is evident from his notes for a speech on the Scottsboro case:

The chief demand of the enlightened Negroes—the only one that really moves them—is *the demand for equal rights*:

1. Political
2. Economic
3. Social

All the so-called white bourgeois movements on behalf of Negroes smell of patronage and charity.

Conditions can be really changed only by struggle against the class regime which breeds them.

The Scottsboro case is the first large-scale dramatization of a struggle on this line....

The idea that can really stir the Negroes is the idea of solidarity of the white and Negro workers.

One act by the white workers worth more than a thousand arguments.¹¹⁶

Trotsky, however, continued to support the demand for self-determination. Swabeck argued with him in *Prinkipo* in 1933. In March 1933 Shachtman wrote a lengthy treatise, "Communism and the Negro," which he sent to Trotsky, who replied, "My opinion on the Negro question is completely hypothetical in character. I know very little about it and am always ready to learn" ("The European Sections Will Not Support You," 1 May 1933). There is no evidence that Trotsky ever read Shachtman's thesis.¹¹⁷ In his discussions with Swabeck, Trotsky assumed that the oppression of blacks in the United States paralleled that of national minorities in the tsarist empire and most of the rest of the world, where language and, less commonly, religion are defining characteristics. Thus he posited the existence of a separate black language in the United States. But American slavery had created a genuinely unique situation. The slave population had been drawn from West Africa, a patchwork of peoples and languages. Torn out of their native societies and forcibly carried across the Atlantic Ocean in the horrific Middle Passage, the ancestors of American blacks were stripped of their previous tribal identities and thoroughly amalgamated as slaves via the English language and Christianity. Slaveholders consciously separated slaves who spoke the same native language (even in liberated Haiti the black population spoke a patois of the colonial language, French).

Shachtman's theses correctly defined the American black population as a *caste*, and saw the migration of rural Southern blacks to urban areas as a crucial development for the American class struggle:

The formation of an industrial Negro proletariat is the last contribution to the advancement of the black race by the American capitalist order. But this contribution has attached to it such a monstrous system for the double exploitation, oppression, and persecution of all the

Negroes, as has reduced them to the lowest rank in the social order, where they are forcibly retained as the pariah, the low caste, the untouchable of American capitalist democracy....

The Communists not only fight for the general interests of the Negroes as workers and poor farmers, but they raise the special demand for the abolition of all discriminatory legislation and practices directed against the Negro, for the establishment of full social, economic, and political equality of the colored race. The militant fight (and not cringing subservience to the white master class) for these demands is a revolutionary democratic struggle directed against the whole ruling class and one of the principal props of its domination, as well as against the petty-bourgeois Negro stratum which is allied to this ruling class.¹¹⁸

By 1932 the Communist Party's authority among the black masses in the urban North, and in Birmingham and areas of rural Alabama, had grown enormously. For most of the 1920s the Party had insisted on "boring from within" the AFL craft unions, most of which excluded blacks. This made it almost impossible to organize black workers. Third Period dual unionism removed that barrier and the Party took up the struggle against Jim Crow unionism to explosive effect in Gastonia. After the CP's 1930 convention determined that the demand for self-determination applied only to the American South, the thrust of the Party's propaganda in the urban areas became the championship of full social and political equality. The Party aggressively organized racially integrated Unemployed Councils and anti-eviction squads and campaigned against lynch law, culminating in the Scottsboro defense effort.

While the CLA continued to agitate for full social, economic, and political equality for blacks—the programmatic kernel of a revolutionary perspective—they lacked a fully elaborated program or theoretical understanding of how the fight for black liberation intersects the American class struggle. This question, integral to the American revolution, deserved much more attention in the CLA than it got. Neither side in the factional polarization sought to fight the issue through to a conclusion with Trotsky, leading to an irresolution that cost the American Trotskyists dearly during the next decade.¹¹⁹

Tensions Over the *Weekly Militant*

Cannon grasped earlier and more thoroughly than Shachtman and Abern that Lovestone's purge would cut off further substan-

tial growth from the Party. By August 1929 he was writing to Glotzer, "We realize more and more that we have to build anew, almost from the ground up."¹²⁰ That this was a source of the early tension was later recognized by Shachtman:

Cannon began to advance the point of view that we were in it for a long, long haul; and while we were not at all inclined to reject that point of view, and while we had no particular illusions that we would become a huge organization overnight, or even in a very short time, we seemed to detect in his attitude on our perspectives a feeling that nothing much could be done in the coming period and that he himself was going to withdraw more or less from active participation in the leadership.¹²¹

Before the CLA founding conference the American Trotskyists had embarked on an ambitious program to raise \$2,000 to make the *Militant* weekly.¹²² This goal was never met and the *Militant* skipped three *biweekly* issues in summer 1929.¹²³ By fall Cannon was evidently arguing against increasing the frequency of the paper. Nonetheless in November the *Militant* went weekly, shortly after Cannon had taken a full-time job outside the League and in the midst of his personal crisis.

The League's slender resources could not sustain the weekly. When it was proposed that Shachtman visit Trotsky in Prinkipo to ask for a subsidy, Cannon vehemently opposed the trip. The issue was taken to the National Committee members outside of New York. In February 1930 a rump NC meeting of Skoglund, Glotzer, Swabeck, and Shachtman was held in Chicago, in conjunction with a visit by Shachtman for a family funeral. We have found no minutes of the meeting, but it clearly authorized Shachtman's journey to Prinkipo, which was financed by the personal savings of Morris Lewit, a skilled plumber.¹²⁴

Cannon's opposition to asking Trotsky for money was based on more than a belief that the weekly was unviable. He appears to have argued against accepting international subsidy in principle. This comes through in two letters Swabeck wrote in answer to Cannon's arguments:

I am certain that the disastrous effects of a subsidized movement in this country, and for that matter elsewhere, have been sufficiently demonstrated to convince all of us. *That is on the basis of subsidizing which has been established by the Stalin regime.* But I am of the opinion that what was proposed and now carried out by the departure of Max could not in any way be considered a matter of establishing that practice and certainly not in the Stalinist sense.¹²⁵

Swabeck admitted that he had his own misgivings about the weekly, but argued that returning to a biweekly would be a retreat, hence not a step to be taken lightly.

Only a year earlier Cannon had written to Trotsky, "It seems to us that international collaboration and coordination of work is now one of the most pressing needs of the Oppositionists in all countries."¹²⁶ Beginning in late 1929, however, there are indications of a certain wariness toward Trotsky on Cannon's part. In notes for an internal speech he wrote "no more master servant" in describing the League's attitude toward international collaboration.¹²⁷ After July 1929 he did not write to Trotsky for *three and a half years*.

This wariness may have been fueled by Trotsky's urging the CLA to "exert heroic efforts to maintain the weekly," evidently taking a side against Cannon in the CLA's internal dispute.¹²⁸ Moreover, in his greetings to the weekly, Trotsky posited that the American Left Opposition should develop directly into a revolutionary party instead of acting as an expelled faction fighting to win the cadre of the Communist Party. Shachtman convinced Trotsky that the American CP still organized the vanguard elements of the proletariat, and Trotsky wrote to the CLA to admit his error. Cannon published a *Militant* article hailing Trotsky's correction—this in a period when he wrote very little.¹²⁹

In May 1930 the CLA National Committee held a plenum to discuss the tensions in the New York resident committee. Trotsky had been unable to offer the League immediate financial help, although he did promise help in the future.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, the plenum decided to maintain the weekly and to appoint Shachtman managing editor. Abern was appointed national secretary. Spector was to move to New York to assist in the production of the *Militant*. It was also decided that Arne Swabeck, known as an objective comrade, should move to New York at the earliest opportunity to work in the League office.¹³¹

Cannon later wrote to his Minneapolis supporters that he believed Shachtman and co. had withdrawn at the last minute from their plans to replace the "degenerated" Cannon leadership at the May plenum. He noted:

I got the impression that you comrades, and Swabeck also, held your judgment in abeyance on that occasion. You had every right to do that, because the merits of the dispute seemed to hang on the say-

so of the disputants—there was not much tangible material to go by....As long as the issues remained obscure, indefinite, or at least so indefinite that the organization as a whole would not be able to comprehend them, it was best to seek the path of conciliation in the committee and not stir up the members.¹³²

After the May 1930 plenum, Glotzer, Abern, and Spector withdrew from active participation in the League's leadership. Shachtman, in contrast, began to collaborate with Cannon, as the latter noted in the same 1932 letter:

Out of the group of four that was to supplant the outlived leadership, three went to sleep, and not like the bear, for the winter months only, but for the whole year round. The necessity of establishing some kind of working relations with what was left of "Cannon" then suggested itself to Shachtman, since there were no others. I met him more than halfway, and together we soon began to pull the League out of the hole.¹³³

The decisions of the plenum did not succeed in saving the weekly *Militant*; its frequency returned to biweekly in July. Announced as a temporary expedient for the summer, biweekly publication continued for an entire year. Spector's stay in New York to help with the *Militant* was apparently brief. Swabeck arrived in December 1930, taking over the job of national secretary. Karsner had already assumed the post of *Militant* business manager, and the League bought an old linotype machine and press, moving into a larger headquarters to accommodate them. Swabeck initiated another \$2,000 fund drive for an Expansion Program to stabilize the League's publishing capabilities. Over the next year the CLA created the Pioneer Publishing Company and, in July, transformed the *Militant* from a tabloid to a full-size weekly paper.¹³⁴

The full \$2,000 was never raised, however, and the *Militant* remained on shaky financial ground. The CLA still poured virtually all its monetary resources into publishing efforts. Trotsky donated \$1,000 in December 1931, which brought stability for a few months. In a letter to Shachtman, Trotsky expressed the hope that part of this money would be used to launch a long-promised English-language theoretical journal.¹³⁵ While the League did prepare to launch a theoretical magazine, *International Communist Review*, the bulk of the donation appears to have gone to publishing projects to reach new layers of the immigrant working class: a youth paper, *Young Spartacus*; a Yiddish paper, *Unser Kampf*; and a

Greek paper, *Communistes*. In March 1932 the CLA was forced to abandon plans for the theoretical journal.¹³⁶

Certainly the publication of three new journals was an optimistic undertaking. Its wisdom has to be judged against the fact that by April the League had to undertake another urgent fund appeal to keep the weekly from going under. *Communistes* and *Unser Kampf* appeared irregularly; *Young Spartacus* had a more-or-less monthly frequency. While the youth paper had a base in the Spartacus Youth Clubs, it is less clear that the two foreign-language journals had a firm readership among the foreign-born workers they targeted.¹³⁷ None of the journals could sustain itself financially over the long term, while their continued publication took desperately needed resources away from the *Militant* and the projected theoretical journal. However, there is no record in the resident committee minutes that Swabek opposed the publication of the new journals, as Shachtman and his cohorts asserted in "Prospect and Retrospect."¹³⁸

The CLA seems to have united around its ambitious publishing program, which also included pamphlets and books. Cannon proposed the publication of *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, as well as Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*.¹³⁹ Edited by Shachtman, the books appeared in 1931, along with pamphlets on the Soviet economy and the unfolding revolution in Spain. In 1932 Trotsky's "Germany, the Key to the International Situation" was published. Morris Lewit did much of the early translating from the Russian; he would translate aloud to Shachtman, who would type the text.¹⁴⁰ Trotsky praised the League's editions of his works; indeed, the American Opposition's record in this regard was unparalleled. Their heroic publishing program provided the basis for the American cadre to programmatically assimilate the lessons of Stalinism's betrayals that Trotsky hammered into the historical record of the working class.

Cannon Revives

In December 1930 Cannon led a crucial internal fight, with Shachtman's collaboration, against the views of Albert Weisbord, who had won support among some CLAsers in the New York branch. Expelled from the CP in 1929, Weisbord tried to straddle the line between the Left and Right Oppositions, advocating that the CLA unite with the Lovestoneites for "mass work" in the trade

unions.¹⁴¹ Swabeck's arrival in New York around the same time contributed greatly to Cannon's political revival. In early 1931 Cannon began to write a regular *Militant* column, which continued into 1933.¹⁴² The close collaboration between Swabeck and Cannon in the League's Expansion Program laid the basis for their political alliance against Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer in 1932.

Without Swabeck's efforts in stabilizing the CLA in 1931, there would certainly have been further organizational disintegration and perhaps a split. Swabeck undertook the move to New York at great personal sacrifice, giving up a high-paying job in Chicago. For the first few months, he and his family lived on personal savings. In April the resident committee decided to pay him a salary of \$25 a week so he could forego outside work. (Shachtman, with a working wife and no children to support, got \$10.) The CLA rarely had the money to pay even these nominal wages. Swabeck's family took in boarders to help pay the rent; his wife worked cleaning houses.¹⁴³

Despite the apparent unity of the national office in 1931, bitterness over the early disputes lingered, fueled by the unrelenting financial crisis and Shachtman's view of his position on the ILO International Bureau as a personal fiefdom. Cannon's veiled polemic against Shachtman's international report at the CLA's Second National Conference in September and, even more, the fight over Shachtman's proposal to add Lewit and Basky to the National Committee, were signs that the tensions were about to boil over. In December, while Shachtman was on leave in Europe, Cannon wrote to Swabeck, "The situation is becoming impossible." Projecting a budget cut, he advised Swabeck, then in Chicago on a speaking tour, to look for work in case a temporary retreat became necessary:

Take a little warning from my experience two years ago....I had plenty of time to reflect over everything, while Rose and I were going about from place to place trying to bum a place to sleep for the night. That was when I began to make an interesting discovery that I was the son of a bitch who was the cause of all the trouble. Well, I won't forget that, and I will not wish that experience on another. That is why I am giving you due warning.¹⁴⁴

Shachtman had a very different view of the years 1929–30, as is apparent in "A Bad Situation in the American League" (13 March 1932), where he complained that Trotsky's criticisms of his international functioning were being used against him:

It is unfortunate that certain paragraphs from these letters have been made the foundation for such factional attacks which can only result in counteracting the few years of effective work which we conducted in this country and to which I sought to contribute as much as I could, while others who now accuse me so violently were in comfortable retirement.

Shachtman, Glotzer, and Abern made much of Cannon's 1929-30 partial political withdrawal in their lengthy June 1932 document, "Prospect and Retrospect." *But they objected with far more vehemence to Cannon's political revival.* Shachtman chafed under Cannon's attempts to get the National Committee to take control of Shachtman's international functioning. Before the fight on this question broke out in early 1932, Shachtman and his allies skirmished with Cannon over his so-called "theory of gestation." This remained an issue throughout the CLA's long factional polarization.

Gestation?

The controversy over "gestation" appears to have arisen from the following passage in a May 1930 article by Cannon on the genesis of the CLA from the CP's Cannon faction:

We were "prepared by the past" for our place under the banner of the International Left Opposition. Lovestone and Company served their apprenticeship and became journeymen opportunists, qualified for union with Brandler, in the American party struggles.

The protracted period of our gestation as a faction on the line of the Bolshevik-Leninists has not been without compensating advantages. The rich experiences of the international struggle were realized for us, as it were, in advance, and we have been able to build on their foundations. This ensured for us a clearer perspective and tactical line.¹⁴⁵

Shachtman and his friends denied emphatically that there was any political basis for the Left Opposition in the views defended by the CP's Cannon faction. Shachtman countered:

The Cannon group maintained a sort of independent position, leaning now toward one faction, now toward the other. The struggle for what it considered the Marxist position, against opportunism, for party democracy, constantly confronted one enormous obstacle, which it failed to understand or perceive for years: the obstacle of the international implications of the struggle. It conducted its struggle on an essentially national ground, interesting itself little and knowing less about the burning fight between Marxism and national socialist opportunism that was taking place in the Russian party and the international. It went along with all the policies of

the ruling regime in the international, even though its concurrence lacked the venomous enthusiasm of the Lovestone faction; even though, in private conversation, its adherents expressed doubt about the course of the Stalin-Zinoviev machine against the Russian Opposition.¹⁴⁶

As late as 1954, Shachtman was still insisting that Cannon's adoption of Trotskyism at the Sixth Congress was a historical fluke: "That Cannon should have decided in 1928, out of the clear blue, to support the Russian Opposition, was an accident, and the motives that prompted him have been the subject of all sorts of speculation in the past (some interesting; others preposterous)." Glotzer maintained that Cannon was an unreformed Zinovievist—that he never fundamentally broke from the bureaucratism and unprincipled organizational maneuvering of the degenerating Comintern.¹⁴⁷

But the simplest and most straightforward explanation for Cannon's coming over to Trotsky is that *he wanted to make a proletarian revolution*. Unlike Foster, Bedacht, Bittelman, and the rest of the future Stalinist hacks—to say nothing of the unspeakable Lovestone crew—Cannon did not resign himself to accepting a lesser goal. The Critique of the Comintern's Draft Program was Trotsky's first programmatically comprehensive treatment of the erosion of the revolutionary fiber of the Comintern. Its cogent political analysis won Cannon over immediately. Previous Opposition documents available in English were only partial, and Cannon may not have even read them.

As we have previously noted, the Cannon group members were not "Trotskyists in embryo," i.e., they had not broken with the program of socialism in one country and were motivated largely by nationally limited concerns. But there was much in their worldview that predisposed them to the Left Opposition's views:

The fight of the Cannon-Foster faction against an orientation to La Follette's bourgeois third party movement after the 1924 elections; Cannon's insistence on the leading role of the working class in any farmer-labor party; the strong, if skewed, internationalism that made Cannon break with Foster and refuse to lead a rightist revolt against the Communist International in 1925; Cannon's attempt to reverse the dead-end factional wars which crippled and deformed the party after 1925; his willingness to break with the party's adaptation to the AFL unions in 1928: all this predisposed Cannon to make the leap to the Left Opposition when that option presented itself. Cannon, unlike the other Workers Party leaders, had not been made

cynical by the corrupt maneuvering inside the degenerating Comintern. The fact that a number of Cannon's factional supporters, including Abern and Shachtman, made the leap to Trotskyism with Cannon only reinforces this point.¹⁴⁸

Cannon fought hard against the Shachtman group's denigration of the record of the CP's Cannon faction, as the following 1932 speech notes indicate:

He [Shachtman] demands that we should have developed from the first as supporters of the Left Opposition.

Where in the world did that happen?

Further: Where in the whole world, outside of Russia, did a faction come to the Left Opposition and give it convincing proofs of its right?

All of this refutes the idea that it came by chance, as a maneuver.

Take the examples: Urbahns; Fischer-Maslow; Paz; Van Overstraeten, etc.; Lore.

All these groups proved to be false representatives.

How do you account for the fact that we proved to be *true representatives*?

If we were "prepared by the past" of the Russian Opposition alone—and not by our own past—why weren't these groups so prepared?

To put this question is to answer it—Shachtman has to falsify Party history and our own history—to make this absurd contention.¹⁴⁹

The Cannon faction in the CP was forged in hard opposition to the unprincipled maneuverism and organizational adventurism of the Ruthenberg-Pepper-Lovestone faction, which took on an increasingly opportunist political coloration after Ruthenberg's death in 1927. With Lovestone the leader of the Right Opposition in the U.S., the majority of the CLA leadership was inoculated against softness on the RO, the issue that shipwrecked the Spanish section, led to the foundering of Polish Trotskyism, and ruined the building of a Danish Trotskyist organization.¹⁵⁰ Shachtman et al.'s arrogant dismissal of the record of the Cannon faction is an indication of their trivialization of this defining programmatic issue.

In May 1930 Shachtman wrote to Trotsky inquiring about the permissibility of blocs with Lovestone's supporters in the trade unions, noting that he was "not entirely clear in my mind as to how this situation can be handled." Trotsky replied, "Of course it is out of the question for us to enter into any kind of bloc with the right that the Party does not participate in."¹⁵¹ Insisting the

CP-led Third Period unions threatened “trade-union unity,” Lovestone’s group invariably supported the AFL trade unions and their reactionary leadership. Sharply distinguishing its policy from the AFL cretinism of the Lovestoneites, the CLA supported the CP-led new industrial unions in industries where these unions had some mass support and where the reactionary AFL unions had proved to be open agents of the bosses. This was the case in mining, the needle trades, and the textile industry. Calling for a massive campaign to organize the unorganized into the new unions, the CLA denounced the sectarian and adventurist policies of the Stalinist leadership that by 1930 had reduced to hollow shells even these relatively well-based Third Period unions. They called on the Party to form a united front with the “progressives” in the trade unions, either through organizing new unions or building oppositions within the AFL unions.¹⁵²

There were wobbles on the question of unity with the Lovestoneites. In 1930 a new Farmer-Labor Party based in Plentywood, Montana included Finnish cooperatives recently expelled from the Communist Party, as well as disaffected members of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and Lovestoneites. The Minneapolis branch of the CLA participated in a left-wing journal supporting this bloc, and Tom O’Flaherty, a CP Cannon faction member and founding CLAer, was editor of the journal. The CLA National Committee publicly disavowed the effort in the *Militant*.¹⁵³ While the Minneapolis branch majority came to agree with the NC, O’Flaherty, whose membership was already tenuous, broke with the CLA over the issue.¹⁵⁴ In the New York local, Weisbord found some support for “mass work” with the Lovestoneites in late 1930.¹⁵⁵

In July 1931, however, both Swabeck and Shachtman wrote to the A.S. to oppose the Spanish section’s plans to unify with Maurín’s BOC. (Maurín’s centrist group had called a conference to unify all Communists, and the A.S. was debating the ILO’s orientation.) Swabeck wrote:

We find it entirely correct that the Left Opposition should be represented at the unity conference to utilize it as one more opportunity to state our views of unification and of the tasks of the Communist movement in Spain. But we find it would be a fatal error for the Left Opposition to become a part of the “unified” group which is expected to ensue. We believe the Left Opposition should state in advance and at the conference that it will not furnish a left shield to the right-wing Maurín leadership.¹⁵⁶

Shachtman criticized Nin's refusal to pay attention to the Communist Party:

The official party has resources that it hasn't used yet. The near future will prove it. The Maurinistas will increasingly discredit themselves and the official party will be able to win over many of the working-class elements who now follow the Federation. We too will be able to win over these elements if we don't compromise ourselves, i.e., if we don't fall into the game of lies of the Maurinista "Unity Congress."¹⁷

The CLA NC's quick action in taking a position against unity with Maurin in Spain contrasts sharply with its hesitation on the French trade-union question and Landau's cliquism.

Non-Leninist Organizational Practices

The documents in "The Fight" section of this volume trace the CLA fight as it unfolded in early 1932 through the June plenum, when Shachtman capitulated on the international questions, to the subsequent hardening of organizational lines on a series of issues in early 1933. "Some Considerations on the Results of the National Committee Plenum" (16 June 1932) makes it clear that Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer, and Spector maintained an organized grouping going into the June plenum and afterward, despite the apparent resolution of the international dispute. This document is strongly reminiscent of the letters routinely circulated by the various permanent factions in the Communist Party in the 1920s.

Even after the I.S. intervened and the two sides agreed to dissolve the factions, Shachtman's letters from Prinkipo were mimeographed and circulated among his supporters in the U.S., exactly as the factions within the Communist Party, including the Cannon group, had circulated letters received from their representatives in Moscow. The internal Shachtman factional correspondence in this volume contrasts sharply with Cannon's letters to his supporters in *The Communist League of America*. Where Shachtman, Glotzer, and Abern are politically vague and gossipy, Cannon is programmatic and forward-looking.¹⁸ The same contrast can be drawn between Shachtman and Glotzer's lengthy letters to Trotsky and Swabeck's terse, informative, correspondence: Examples of both appear in this volume. "Prospect and Retrospect" centers on gripes about Cannon's behavior during his personal crisis in 1929-30; its authors knew this would put him on the

defensive. Cannon was never able to finish his draft reply, in which he wrote:

In the thirteen years that I have been active in the Party—that is, since its foundation—and, I may add, in my activity in the revolutionary movement before the foundation of the Party, I never once took the time to reply to personal attacks....I never construed the Party struggles as personal struggles. I never advanced any personal claims, and do not do so now. I can say quite honestly—and there is sufficient material marking the traces of all the disputes to confirm it—that I never took part in a faction struggle without political aims which transcended persons.¹⁵⁹

The permanent factional lineups that plagued most parties of Zinoviev's Comintern were both the result of, and a contributing factor to, the lack of authoritative national leaderships. Delineated largely by social composition and personal loyalty, such factions often obscured emerging political differentiation. Especially after the break with Foster in 1925, the Cannon group sought to put program first, attempting to break down the system of personalist factionalism in the American party. This stand was no small part of the reason that a section of the group, with Cannon in the lead, made the leap to Trotskyism. Within the CLA, Cannon sought to forge a collective national leadership along Leninist lines. Abern and Glotzer, joined by Shachtman in 1931–33, continued the practice of clique warfare.

Cannon saw the Shachtman faction as a manifestation inside the CLA of the Naville-Landau personalism that was so destructive to the ILO in Europe. In an unfinished draft statement on the dispute commissioned by the International Secretariat in early 1933, he wrote:

The conflict in our National Committee first broke out into the open over the international question. This was no accident. On the contrary it stamped the whole conflict, which has raged for over a year, with its real significance. The struggle against the NC began as a clique-intrigue, it is true, and at every turn and in the face of every question of real importance in the disputes, the minority has sought to bury the fundamental issues under a shower of personal accusations and slander, to explain everything by the faults and bad intentions of this or that person....By their *methods* in the conflict—clique-combinations, personal campaigns, unprincipled blocs, formal acceptance of resolutions and a contrary practice, undermining of discipline—by these methods they have shown that the first open clash with us on the international question gave the real measure of their differences with us in a fundamental sense.¹⁶⁰

Yet there was no qualitative programmatic differentiation between the two groups. The lack of substantive differences frustrated Cannon immensely. Indicative of the senseless heat was Shachtman's attempt to expel alternate NC member Bernard Morgenstern for his religious wedding (on the night he was released from prison!) to which he consented in order to please his parents. Shachtman's vindictive attempt to railroad Morgenstern out of the League for an act which was under the circumstances understandable was opposed by Cannon, who was in turn accused of running a factional protection racket.

It must be noted, however, that non-Leninist organizational practices in the CLA hardened the factional lines. This was particularly the case with the dispute over the co-optations to the National Committee voted at the June plenum. Before the plenum, Abern, Shachtman, and Glotzer had been able to outvote Cannon and Swabek on the resident committee, and so a poll of the entire National Committee was required before an authoritative statement on the international question could be issued. In a Bolshevik organization, it is untenable for the resident leading body not to reflect the National Committee majority. This situation was formally resolved at the plenum when Shachtman capitulated on the international question. Cannon, however, did not want to risk a repeat of the preplenum situation. He therefore proposed to co-opt Basky and Gordon (both Cannon supporters) to full membership in the National Committee and to co-opt George Clarke as an alternate member. As New York residents, all three would sit on the resident committee. The plenum adopted this proposal over the objections of Shachtman and co. Because altering the composition of the National Committee in the absence of political differences or a delegated national conference was irregular, Cannon proposed to submit the co-optations to a referendum of the CLA membership.

Holding a written poll of the entire membership runs counter to Leninist organizational practice: It substitutes for deliberation and decision at the highest level (a delegated conference) the vote of a membership atomized in the absence of collective national discussion. Without defined programmatic differences, Cannon could not effectively motivate his proposal to the CLA membership. Shachtman et al. were able to use innuendo and gossip to appeal to the *least conscious* elements in the CLA. Feeding their

accusations of bureaucratism was the fact that one of the proposed new NCers, Gordon, had been a member for two years only, a violation of the CLA Constitution, which required four years of membership in the Communist movement for election to the leading body.¹⁶¹ There is no Leninist ground for requiring a certain “tenure” in the organization before taking a leading post, but the Shachtman faction was able to take advantage of Cannon’s proposed violation of the CLA Constitution.

Cannon lost the vote on the co-optations. But Glotzer—wittingly or not—resolved the situation by relocating to Chicago, insisting that was the only place he could find a job. Shortly after Glotzer left, Oehler, a Cannon supporter and full NC member, moved to New York from Chicago, giving Cannon a majority of three to two on the resident committee.

Though it was not officially codified in the League Constitution, the CLA appears to have unthinkingly carried over from the Stalinizing Comintern the policy of National Committee “discipline,” i.e., that disputes within the NC should not be reported to the membership except in an official preconference discussion period before they are brought to the conference for decision. But the “unanimity” of the leading committee cannot be decreed. While it is preferable to debate disputed questions in the leading body first, such differences are often an indication that similar differences—or at least confusion—exist among the membership as well. Thorough discussion can politically sharpen the organization as a whole, although this possible gain has to be weighed against the disruption such discussion can cause to ongoing work. A major dispute in the leading committee generally mandates the calling of a national conference so that the membership can discuss and decide the issue. In the case of disagreements over principled or programmatic issues, it is the right and duty of a Leninist to attempt to mobilize the whole party behind his/her position and, ultimately, to build a faction.

“Committee discipline” was in any case honored only selectively. Disputes within the NC were reported, at least to some members, through factional communication, as the documents amply show. Operationally discipline was along *factional* lines. With “informal” lines of communication predominating, the membership was denied collective discussion and the clash of opinion in the branches, the only possibility of clarifying the political basis of

the disputes. This fueled the Abern clique, which thrived on giving its members the “real scoop.” Unfortunately “committee discipline” remained the policy of the American Trotskyist leadership at least through the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party in the 1960s.

Irregular financial practices also contributed to the fight. In November 1932 the League tried to regularize its financing by creating a graduated dues structure based on income.¹⁶² The flow of money into the party center, however, remained erratic. In lieu of wages, staff meal expenses were sometimes paid out of petty cash, leading to bitterness and accusations of favoritism that fueled Abern’s gossip mill.¹⁶³ Itinerant organizers were frequently stranded in the field with no cash; when they were paid, this too led to insinuations of favoritism.¹⁶⁴ Funds raised for one purpose were often used for another.¹⁶⁵

The financial irregularities of the American section were noted with some consternation in the international. The staff of the Russian-language *Bulletin of the Opposition*, financed by payments from national sections for *Bulletins* received, was continually furious with the CLA: “The *Militant* is the only one that does not pay us. There is no doubt that if the other groups had acted as the League, we would have had to cease publication of the *Bulletin* a long time ago....Frankly, I must say that the *Militant*’s attitude, known in the various sections in Europe, causes profound amazement.”¹⁶⁶ Payments to the International Secretariat were also irregular.¹⁶⁷

In November 1932 Trotsky was granted a visa to go to Copenhagen to speak to a student conference—his first trip out of Turkey since his exile from the USSR. Cannon proposed that the League send Swabeck, a Dane by birth, to consult with Trotsky and attend the anticipated ILO conference, to be held in connection with Trotsky’s trip. Shachtman and Abern refused to vote for Swabeck as an official CLA delegate, insisting that the proposed trip was “personal.” Swabeck never made it to Copenhagen, although the Cannon faction did manage to raise the funds to send him to Europe. He attended the February 1933 International Preconference in Paris, and then went to Germany to consult with the ILO section just after Hitler’s ascension to power.¹⁶⁸ He continued to Prinkipo, where his discussions with Trotsky were invaluable in laying the basis for Trotsky’s intervention into the CLA. He

returned to Paris, again traveling through Germany, and attended a May ILO plenum. As indicated by his letters to Cannon, Swabeck was stranded for lack of funds in both Prinkipo and Paris.

Shachtman and Abern vehemently opposed putting Cannon on the CLA payroll as national secretary during Swabeck's absence. The personal bitterness fueling Shachtman's opposition and his dismissiveness toward party organization were apparent when he wrote to Antoinette Konikow about the question:

Although we are quite reliably informed that Cannon has been laid off from his job, he came in to the committee meeting with the story that he was ready to "quit" his job in order to sacrifice himself for the movement by taking up the post of secretary during Swabeck's absence, and very likely, even after his return from Europe. It was also proposed that he be guaranteed a minimum of \$25 a week, with a similar "guarantee" for Shachtman of \$15 a week. It now becomes quite clear why, after a silence of the grave on this delicate subject for seven months, Cannon has for the past two weeks been talking with considerable indignation about the fact that the functionaries in the office are not being paid; that they are consequently demoralized and unable to take care of themselves or their work. To put it brutally, it was all part of a low advertising campaign in preparation for the proposal to put Cannon into the office of secretary.¹⁶⁹

Given the controversy, Cannon assumed the post on a voluntary (i.e., unpaid) basis. The document by Oehler and Swabeck on Cannon's appointment, "For Cannon as National Secretary" (10 January 1933), is an excellent statement of the professionalism necessary in the building of a Leninist vanguard.

Even with Cannon assuming Swabeck's administrative duties, there was still a great danger of paralysis of the resident committee: Tie votes of two to two would have been likely with only Cannon, Oehler, Shachtman, and Abern voting. Cannon attempted to solve the problem by using his majority on the National Committee to deprive Abern of his vote. Trotsky strongly objected to this undemocratic procedure, which he saw as part of a pattern of organizational impatience by the Cannon group. Abern was given back his vote. Relations, however, remained at a breaking point through spring 1933. Both Cannon and Shachtman fled New York—Cannon to the Midwest and Shachtman to Europe. For most of May 1933 there was no resident committee in New York. Abern had withdrawn in pique, and Rose Karsner administered the organization.

The CLA began to publish an *Internal Bulletin* after the June plenum in order to circulate to the membership the major factional statements on both sides. This was in itself a major innovation—in the earlier period, internal discussion material, usually reflecting only minor disputes, had been published in the *Militant*. However, Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer's "Prospect and Retrospect," written for the June 1932 plenum (where it was withdrawn, only to be resubmitted a few weeks later) never appeared in the *IB*. Cannon insisted it could only be published with a written reply, which he was never able to complete. Throughout the period of intense factional polarization, Cannon's NC majority refused to open the *IB* to membership discussion and contributions. Under Leninist norms, internal discussion is supposed to be regulated by the leading body, with discussion arrangements (or lack thereof) justified in each particular case. The point is to strive for maximum political clarity while maintaining the party's capacity for intervention into ongoing social struggle. The League membership was in fact intensely polarized by the fight. Spartacus Youth leader Nathan Gould caught an essential quality when he commented in a letter to Oehler:

The inevitable result of a split would be the existence of two groups in America, both agreeing fundamentally upon all political principled matters with the international. Both arriving upon the same conclusions on all political questions, only one calling Cannon a lazy, moody Irishman and the other calling Shachtman a supercilious, literary Jew who is impressed more by the literary value of a document than the political contents. This must not be.¹⁷⁰

In later years, beginning with the Workers Party/U.S., the *Internal Bulletin* was open to comment on disputed issues within the party.

Cannon was rightly concerned that the League could become a talk shop. Shachtman and Abern's coddling of the glib petty-bourgeois youth in the New York local (the "Carter group") was an issue leading up to the June 1932 plenum. As the documents which open "The Fight" section indicate, the dispute broke out over Carter's misrepresentation of Engels' 1895 introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*. The malicious falsification of Engels' introduction by the Social Democrats was a well-worn issue in the revolutionary communist movement, and Cannon and Swabek effectively demolished Shachtman's defense of Carter in their document, "Internal Problems of the CLA."¹⁷¹ The issue,

however, was not so much Engels' introduction as the flippant and overly literary political approach of the Carter group, which Cannon and Swabeck described as "a grouping of youth elements of the scholastic student type, who have not yet assimilated the communist proletarian spirit, who combine a sterility of ideas and criticism with a detestable parvenu self-assurance."¹⁷²

New York City was the center of Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer's support. Cannon saw the material basis for their clique in the overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois composition of the branch. This problem continued to dominate Cannon's view of the fight in later years:

Our difficulties were increased by the fact that many recruits were not first-class material. Many of the people who joined the New York branch weren't really there by justice. They weren't the type who, in the long run, could build a revolutionary movement—dilettantes, petty-bourgeois undisciplined elements.¹⁷³

Notably, Shachtman later wrote about the CLA's national recruitment in the same vein:

We tended in the early days to attract mainly the younger people, students, intellectuals good and bad, very few workers, even fewer active trade unionists, still fewer unionists active in the basic and most important unions, but more than a few dilettantes, well-meaning blunderers, biological chatterboxes, ultraradical oat-sowers, unattachable wanderers, and many other kinds of sociological curiosa. Most of them made bivouac with us for a while, but not for too long.¹⁷⁴

Cannon sought to break his own young supporters from the petty-bourgeois mold, dispatching Tom Stamm and Sam Gordon as field organizers to build proletarian branches in Pennsylvania and Ohio. By fall 1932, the combination of increased field activity and the CLA's effective propaganda was having a growing impact on Communist Party members concerned about the German party's failure to fight Hitler's growing power. In late September the Party district organizer in Davenport, Iowa was forced to debate George Papcun, a recent CLA recruit, on the subject of "socialism in one country"; three CP branch members subsequently wrote a letter demanding a serious discussion of the ILO program. CLA supporters were also having success in Des Moines, Iowa. In October the CLA recruited Sebastian Pappas, a prominent member of the Party's Food Workers Industrial Union in New York.¹⁷⁵ In November Cannon wrote to Gordon:

We created a good central propaganda machine, but we must see to it that we direct the machine and that the machine does not direct us and keep us in a vicious circle. As the problem now presents itself, we cannot broaden our activities and develop the organizational side of our work as it must be developed now, without more resources. And we cannot create more resources without broadening the activities. It will be very bad for us if we do not recognize the second contradiction and devote ourselves to the solution of it.... A decisive new orientation in conformity with the needs and opportunities of the moment will also soon introduce a qualitative change in the composition of the League. If you ask my opinion, I will tell you frankly that I think we have a hell of a lot of dead wood in the League, too many purely literary recruits.¹⁷⁶

In early 1933 Cannon proposed that the New York local admit only bona fide workers into membership for the next six months, a proposal that was vehemently opposed by the branch leadership and ultimately defeated ("Resolution on the Proletarianization of the New York Branch" and "Reject the Proposal on the Proletarianization of the New York Branch," [early February 1933]). As Trotsky later noted, this mechanical proposal for increasing the working-class membership of the branch was an administrative proposal for a political problem.

The CLA and the Progressive Miners of America

The majority of the Minneapolis branch, led by Vincent Dunne and Carl Skoglund, formed a solid base of support for the Cannon faction throughout the fight. Branch members were at the time working to organize the coal drivers into the Teamsters Union, efforts that came to fruition in the great Minneapolis Teamsters strikes of 1934. In 1929-30 the New York CLA also had some members who worked as a fraction within the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union (NTWIU), the CP's Third Period union. CLA supporters argued for an aggressive organizing campaign to unite the old AFL unions, centered in the men's apparel industry and the furriers, with the NTWIU, centered among the dressmakers, into one industrial organization.¹⁷⁷ *Unser Kampf* prominently covered developments in the needle trades unions.

For most of the CLA's history, however, it appeared that the Trotskyists' best chance to win a base in the working class lay in southern Illinois, where a militant coal miners movement challenged John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers of America (UMW).¹⁷⁸ The CLA's work in this area was often a subject of dispute in spring

1933. In these fights the Shachtman group's cavalier attitude toward the League's links to the working class became manifest.

The CLA had an early base of support in the Illinois coalfields due to Swabek's work as organizer of the CP's District Eight (centered in Chicago and including southern Illinois) during the "Save the Union" movement of 1927-28. The Party leadership had been so concerned about Swabek's influence that William Z. Foster himself was sent to tour southern Illinois shortly after the Trotskyists were expelled in late 1928. Foster managed to stampede back into the Party some of the miner cadre who had earlier supported the Trotskyists, including Gerry Allard. But the *Militant* continued to publish letters from Party miners in southern Illinois protesting the expulsions, including a 13 January 1929 letter that reported the suspension from the Party of Joe Angelo, who was to remain a CLA member through 1934.¹⁷⁹ The CLA had two locals in southern Illinois in 1929, and a defense guard of miners stood ready to repulse any Stalinist provocation at the CLA founding conference.¹⁸⁰

The mine worker recruits were not programmatically grounded, however, and the League did not have the resources to support a regional organizer to politically educate them. The industry was in steep decline, with widespread closings and massive layoffs, and the devastation increased with the onset of the Depression. The number of Illinois miners fell from 103,566 in 1923 to 51,544 in 1932; many were working only half-time or in worker-run cooperative mines abandoned by their owners as unprofitable. The League's southern Illinois branches disintegrated, but it retained individual supporters and a reputation in the area.

An ill-prepared and losing strike by the CP's Third Period National Miners Union (NMU) destroyed the Party's credibility in the coalfields by spring 1930. Allard quit the Party and gravitated back into the League's orbit in early 1931. Cannon wrote some hard criticism of Allard's earlier capitulation in the *Militant*, but Allard was allowed to rejoin the League in September.¹⁸¹

In the Illinois District of the UMW (District 12), by far the strongest, the tyrannical head of the union, John L. Lewis, was widely despised. In late 1929 Lewis tried to bring the district leadership under Harry Fishwick to heel. The district responded in early 1930 by declaring itself the "real" union, the "Reorganized UMW" (RUMW). The new union represented an uneasy alliance of class-collaborationist District 12 bureaucrats with well-known

“progressive” unionists. Backed by A.J. Muste’s Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA), the RUMW included John Brophy, former leader of the “Save the Union” movement, as well as Kansas miners leader Alex Howat. Brophy soon withdrew, but Howat, who had collaborated with the Communists in the past, was elected RUMW president. From March 1930 until March 1931 (when the capitalist courts declared Lewis’ UMW to be the “real” union) virtual civil war ensued in the Illinois coalfields.

The CLA supported the Reorganized UMW, while calling upon the Party’s NMU to join forces with Howat and Brophy within the new union to “push it consistently to the left.” The *Militant* was uncritical of the RUMW’s “progressive” face.¹⁸² Trotsky wrote his first criticism of his American supporters over their uncritical treatment of Brophy and Howat, whom he recognized as careerists who would in the end side with the reactionary AFL bureaucracy led by William Green:

The adherence of Howat and Brophy to the corrupt bureaucracy of Fishwick and Company is one of the indications of the weakening of the revolutionary positions in the trade unions. Howat and Brophy are not unconscious elements who honestly but confusedly swing from right to left, but they are experienced politicians who are now turning from left to right. They are careerists who no longer find it useful to cover themselves with sympathy for communism, because they consider it sufficiently weakened and compromised.

In the present conditions, the principal danger in the trade unions is represented by elements of the type of Howat and Brophy. It is they that are, and above all will become, the whips in the service of the Green bureaucracy....No illusions at all are permissible about these gentlemen who call themselves by the absolutely inconsistent name of progressives; in the best case it can signify an Americanized species of trade-unionist centrism.¹⁸³

This letter was written in March 1930, while Shachtman was in Prinkipo. Shachtman had authored the *Militant* article, but Trotsky’s criticism targeted the shared orientation of the entire NC, in whose name the article was published.¹⁸⁴ Trotsky’s points on Howat and Brophy were incorporated into a subsequent *Militant* article, and the CLA sought to be more critical of the “progressives.”¹⁸⁵ According to notes for a speech on “Communists and Progressives” a year later, Cannon argued that “‘progressives’ are not a third tendency between procapitalist labor bureaucrats and communists, but are seeking to lead the labor radicalization into procapitalist channels.”¹⁸⁶

However, while the CLA supported the CP's revolutionary unions in areas where they had a social base, within the AFL unions they maintained a strategy of building a so-called left wing with "progressive" elements. The "Draft of the Thesis on the Trade Union Question" adopted by the Second National Conference in September 1931 laid out the League's orientation as both "building of the new militant unions under revolutionary leadership" and "developing and strengthening of the left wing wherever the masses are grouped."¹⁸⁷ The League saw its policy of building the "left wing" in AFL unions as an application of the united front.

As developed initially by the Communist International, the united front is a tactic to be used when there is a chance of agreement with reformist or centrist organizations on common *action* in defense of the working class; such agreement generally comes only episodically as a result of the pressure of their working-class base on the reformist leaders. The communists must retain their own programmatic identity, exposing the vacillations of the reformist leadership and attempting to win its working-class base away from illusions in the "neutrality" of the bourgeois state and reformability of capitalism. In the early American Communist Party, this tactic had been transformed into a strategy of forming blocs with the progressives and was advocated by both the Foster and Cannon factions in building the Party's trade-union arm, the Trade Union Educational League. That this strategy was carried over uncritically into the CLA shows that the League leadership had not fully assimilated a key point of communist politics that was central to Trotsky's polemics against the *Opposition Unitaire* in France:

The conception of the party as the proletarian vanguard presupposes its full and unconditional independence from all other organizations. The various agreements (blocs, coalitions, compromises) with other organizations, unavoidable in the course of the class struggle, are permissible only on the condition that the party always turns its own face toward the class, always marches under its own banner, acts in its own name, and clearly explains to the masses the aims and limits within which it concludes the given agreement.¹⁸⁸

In the early 1930s, "progressive" elements in the AFL unions were generally organized by A.J. Muste's Conference for Progressive Labor Action, the Socialist Party, or the Lovestoneites. As an expelled faction of the Communist Party, the League was careful not to enter into blocs with these forces *against* the Party and its

red unions. But the strategy of building a "left wing" with progressives in the trade unions impacted the work of the American Trotskyists later in the decade.¹⁸⁹

The "Reorganized UMW" reunited with the Lewis UMW in March 1931, but anti-Lewis sentiment remained strong in Illinois. Howat, backed by Muste's CPLA, sponsored a mine workers conference in St. Louis, projecting the formation of a new union. At the conference CLA supporters fought for a new union that would merge with the CP's National Union of Miners. But Howat and his backers decided that they did not yet have enough support to found a new union.¹⁹⁰

A year later a wildcat strike swept the Illinois coalfields when Lewis attempted to enforce a new contract with a substantial wage cut (the \$5-a-day scale). After a particularly bloody massacre perpetrated by company thugs at Mulkeytown, outrage against the coal operators and their UMW toadies boiled over, leading to the formation of the Progressive Miners of America (PMA) in September 1932. Playing a big role at the PMA's founding conference, Gerry Allard was elected to the executive board and became editor of its journal.¹⁹¹

Discredited in the region, the Communist Party had lost almost all its supporters, who were precluded in any case from participating in the PMA by the CP's Third Period sectarianism. But the Socialist Party, which still had a base there, supported the PMA, as did Muste and the CLA. The predominant element in the PMA leadership, however, was the old UMW District 12 bureaucracy. To gain a toehold in the industry, the PMA leadership soon signed contracts accepting the same \$5-a-day wage scale that the miners had been striking against for over six months. The CLA opposed accepting the \$5 scale, but continued to support the PMA. The Trotskyists seem to have underestimated the increasing hold of the procapitalist and anti-Communist elements in the leadership.

Baiting the PMA as a Communist front, Lewis targeted Allard in particular. After accepting the same rotten wage cut, the PMA had little justification for its independent existence. The congealing bureaucracy turned to virulent anti-Communism, laying the basis for the purge of leftist elements. Allard capitulated before the anti-Communist onslaught, and the CLA NC's repeated criticisms of him sometimes appeared in the *Militant*.¹⁹²

Cannon, well-known in the area as a Communist leader, was invited to address a January 1933 conference called by the Trades and Labor Assembly in Gillespie, Illinois. The PMA was the dominant organization at the conference. Unable to speak as a representative of the CLA because political groups were banned, Cannon chose to speak instead as a representative of a group of "militant New York workers." The ban on political speakers was certainly motivated by the PMA leadership's burgeoning anti-Communism, yet it is notable that they felt compelled to let a known Communist address the delegates, who were to decide the question of initiating a new labor federation counterposed to the AFL. Cannon argued strongly against this course, which could only have further isolated the PMA in the labor movement. Allard told Cannon that his speech was a big factor in the conference decision against a new federation.¹⁹³

Shachtman subsequently attacked not the substance of Cannon's speech, but its auspices. As Cannon wrote, whether or not he spoke as a member of the CLA was an "incidental question." The real question was one of choosing: "1. To speak and influence the gathering; 2. Or to retire with honors and give the right wing best grounds."¹⁹⁴ Shachtman's motion at the February 24 resident committee meeting implicitly attacks Cannon as an opportunist. Shachtman was explicit in his private correspondence:

In the last few years, I have not concealed from myself, at least, the conviction that Cannon has an essentially opportunist bent, especially in trade-union questions. In Swabeck, as you know, it is more than a "bent." The Illinois situation and problem is showing it.¹⁹⁵

Shachtman had earlier sent Angelo a copy of "Prospect and Retrospect."¹⁹⁶ His attempts to line up the CLA miners against Cannon certainly did not help the League's work. In a partial report probably written shortly after he returned from Gillespie, Cannon said:

It appears to me that the Progressive Miners' movement in Illinois is today the most important link in the chain of the left-wing labor movement. Much will depend on what happens there in the next few months. The catastrophic collapse of the Party in this field, the revival of the socialist organization on the basis of the Party's defeat, and the entering wedge already gained by the Left Opposition puts us before an opportunity and a test.¹⁹⁷

Oehler was sent to the southern Illinois coalfields in March and remained through the end of May, leaving Cannon,

Shachtman, and Abern on the resident committee. Shachtman tried to obstruct a proposed tour by Cannon to the coalfields and to a national conference in Chicago called by the ILD and others in defense of Tom Mooney. His proposal to go in Cannon's place was a petty factional maneuver; he completely lacked Cannon's personal authority among the miners.

Trotsky subsequently condemned Shachtman's obstruction of Cannon's trip. He also supported Cannon's stance at the Gillespie conference: "The point is not to unfurl our 'flag' in the trade unions once or twice, and perhaps precisely for this reason, to disappear from them, but rather to gradually win points of support through which we will gain the possibility of unfurling our flag fully" ("The European Sections Will Not Support You," 1 May 1933). Expecting Trotsky's support, Shachtman and Abern were devastated. Cannon recalled, "Trotsky's letter ended the discussion, bango! Just like that!"¹⁹⁸

However, Trotsky later wrote a more substantial document, "Trade-Union Problems in America" (23 September 1933), an implicit criticism of Cannon's approach in the PMA. Trotsky stressed the importance of party fractions in the unions, an ABC for revolutionary Marxists. Essential to consistent work in any milieu is the organization of party cadre in working bodies that regularly meet, discuss how to implement party perspectives, and continually evaluate ongoing work, as laid out in the resolution on organization adopted by the Third Congress of the Communist International.¹⁹⁹ This is the only way the party can act as a "fist" in social struggle. In the absence of fractions responsible to geographically organized local committees, cadres, especially in the trade unions, are inordinately susceptible to political pressures that can pull them off course. Cannon recognized the need for party branches, but he placed the stress on building a broad "left wing" within the PMA:

The organization of groups and branches of the League in various localities is a self-evident necessity for the establishment of a clear line of struggle in the union. But this struggle can be really effective only if it draws in and organizes a much wider circle of militants in a left-wing formation. It is false and abstract to counterpose the League groups to the broader left-wing formation and to insist that the one shall come "first." Such a schematic order does not at all coincide with the real conditions and cannot stand up in practice. In some localities where groups of the LO can be formed they

will naturally take first place and be the medium for the creation of broader organizations. In other localities—and from all indications they will be the majority—it will be necessary to begin with a broader group, in the absence of convinced oppositionists, and work for the crystallization of a League nucleus within it.²⁰⁰

The League organized ad hoc caucuses of CLA supporters at PMA conferences and regional gatherings, but by and large Allard and Angelo functioned as individuals, backed up by Clarke and Oehler, who periodically toured as regional CLA organizers. It is impossible to organize consistent Bolshevik work in the trade unions on this basis. Without a League presence, Allard could only be a blunted instrument, whatever his authority as an individual militant in the PMA.

Oehler's reports back from the coalfields in spring 1933 are instructive. Allard wasn't friendly, and the anti-Communist witchhunt was blossoming into full-blown terror.²⁰¹ One *Militant* subscriber wrote of being beaten on the street.²⁰² In such a situation, Allard was bound to capitulate. While in Chicago for the Mooney conference in early May, Cannon came to some agreement with Allard, but the editor of *Progressive Miner* never lived up to the bargain. Karsner wrote tellingly to Cannon about the CP-dominated Mooney conference:

It looks like Gerry took you in again. Fine promises, then goes back and writes a signed report in the *Progressive Miner* in which he mentions everyone at the conference except the LO. He seems to be catering to the Party this time. From right to left and back again but never straight out with us.²⁰³

Cannon's rosy view of the opportunities in the PMA was motivated in part by the CLA faction fight: He was desperate to find an entry point into a mass proletarian movement and thus recruit a way out of the factional impasse caused by the political weight of the League's literary recruits. It was the responsibility of the CLA leadership to search urgently for opportunities to win mass working-class support. *Because the CLA leadership was orienting toward trade-union opportunities such as the PMA, the Trotskyists were able to take advantage of the breakthrough in the Minneapolis Teamsters a year later.*

League relations with Allard came to a head in April 1933, with Shachtman et al. demanding an immediate break. Cannon knew that he was walking a fine line. It is significant that he wrote Trotsky for advice on the question: "Request for Advice on Allard"

(14 April 1933) is the first letter Cannon had written to Trotsky in three and a half years. It is published here for the first time. We can find no record that Trotsky replied. In any case, the issue was soon moot because Allard quit the CLA and joined Muste's CPLA. The League's other prominent supporter, Joe Angelo, was expelled from the PMA in October. Later in the decade the PMA became a tool of the AFL against John L. Lewis and the CIO.

Cannon Tests Trotsky

Cannon ceased writing to Trotsky in summer 1929. That more was involved than his personal withdrawal from day-to-day administration of the CLA is confirmed by his later reminiscences: "We wondered, especially I personally, how it was going to be in the new International with Trotsky. Was he going to push us around like manikins, or would he give us a little leeway and show us a little respect?" In fall 1932 Cannon tested Trotsky over the relatively trivial question of Trotsky's relations with expelled CLA member B.J. Field (later famous for flouting party discipline during the 1934 hotel workers strike). Not until Trotsky passed the test did Cannon seek his intervention in the CLA's internal dispute, sending Swabeck to Prinkipo and asking for advice about Allard. Cannon later described the period of tension with Trotsky around Field as "the greatest emotional crisis of my life."²⁰⁴

A statistician by training, Field was expelled from the New York CLA in late 1932 for refusing to allow the branch executive to supervise an economics study group he had organized.²⁰⁵ Field went to Prinkipo in September, where Trotsky soon enlisted his help to prepare an economic thesis for the projected ILO conference. Field's documents were published in the press of the French Ligue, with an introduction by Trotsky, just as the CLA was preparing to break off negotiations with the megalomaniacal centrist Albert Weisbord. Weisbord had also gone to Prinkipo to seek Trotsky's support for his quest to fuse his organization with the CLA. It was only because of Trotsky's urging that the CLA had begun negotiations with him.

The publication of documents by an expelled CLA member in the press of another ILO section was formally a breach of democratic centralism and strongly implied a political attack on the CLA leadership. The resident committee's decision to protest Trotsky's collaboration with Field behind the back of the CLA was not

controversial. The protest letter was written by Cannon and signed by Swabeck as League secretary.²⁰⁶ Whether or not Cannon was contemplating a break with the ILO over Field, as Shachtman later alleged, he invested the question with an importance out of proportion to its political substance:

I must admit at that time I was somewhat impressed with the great wave of propaganda about Trotsky's domineering the movement and his ruthless pushing aside of people who didn't carry out his will. And the Old Man *was* a little imperious. He had a way of commanding and in his impatience to get things done, making a shortcut through organization even more than I do....And I remember—talk about my soul-searing periods—in that period I was brooding in my mind that I was not going to under any circumstances tolerate such a thing and if comrade Trotsky was going to insist upon such arbitrary methods, he would have to find somebody else to carry them out. And I lived with the most terrible apprehension of what he would write back.²⁰⁷

Trotsky's conciliatory answer, "A Reply on Field and Weisbord" (20 October 1932), greatly relieved Cannon: "I tell you it was a happy day when we got that letter. That convinced me that we could get along with Trotsky, that we could live with him, that we could have a party of our own which would have its own leaders, and that even the great Trotsky would have respect for our rights."²⁰⁸ Afterward, however, some distrust lingered on Cannon's part: During his fall 1934 meeting with Trotsky in France Cannon made a point of smoking in Trotsky's presence, an act he later regretted.²⁰⁹ Shachtman's 1954 description of Cannon as a simple bureaucratic hack for Trotsky's political views was purely self-serving tendentiousness.²¹⁰ *The collaborative relationship between Cannon and Trotsky was forged through internal fights in the ILO, not least against Shachtman.*

Events in Germany and the New Party Turn

The February 1933 fight over Cannon's public remarks about a possible role for the Soviet Red Army in the battle against fascism in Germany raised programmatic issues prefiguring the decisive 1940 battle over the Russian question. The fight occurred shortly after Hitler was appointed chancellor. Having insisted throughout 1930–32 on the urgent need for united-front actions of the KPD and SPD to stop Hitler, the ILO went all-out to campaign for working-class struggle to prevent the Nazi consolidation of power.

The International Preconference mandated a special fund drive for the German Trotskyist organization. Publishing the *Militant* three times a week from February 11 to March 18, the CLA sold thousands at a penny each, primarily to CP supporters transfixed by the unfolding disaster in Germany. The criminal betrayal of the Stalinists and Social Democrats, who refused to fight against the smashing of all German workers organizations, demoralized many Party members but convinced others of the validity of Trotsky's struggle against the Stalinist perversion of Leninism. The CLA won a number of recruits from the Party, including Chicago lawyer Albert Goldman.

Desperate to shut off the growing support for the CLA, the Stalinists began a hysterical counterattack against the Trotskyists, claiming that Cannon had called for war between Germany and the USSR in public forums in New York. Shachtman and Abern echoed the anti-Cannon chorus within the CLA. What Cannon actually said was in dispute, but in speech notes written a month later he simply followed Trotsky in asserting that Hitler's victory would inevitably lead to war between Germany and the USSR, insisting, "The Red Army must be made ready."²¹¹

As is apparent from "Motion on the Situation in Germany and the Role of the Red Army" (20 February 1933) and "Statement on the Dispute over the Red Army and the German Situation" (12 March 1933), Shachtman and his allies balked at the mere suggestion that the Red Army could be used as a revolutionary force outside Soviet borders. This presaged their abandonment of the military defense of the USSR in fall 1939 when the Red Army invaded Poland and Finland. But in 1933 Shachtman backed off after Trotsky intervened to support the thrust of Cannon's position in "Germany and the USSR" (17 March 1933). However, Trotsky noted that the Red Army was hardly in a state of military preparedness, given the economic privation and demoralization within the USSR.

The episodic Red Army dispute was not central to the CLA's factional polarization. In any case the events in Germany soon led to a radical turn for the ILO. Already in March Trotsky had declared that the German party's prostration before Hitler's consolidation of power meant that it was dead as a revolutionary force. At first Trotsky limited the call for a new party to Germany, but when no organized opposition emerged within the Comintern to

the suicidal Third Period policies that had disarmed and demoralized the German proletariat, Trotsky declared that the Communist International, too, had become a corpse, making an analogy to Rosa Luxemburg's characterization of the Second International as "a stinking corpse" after its betrayal in the face of World War I. He argued for the ILO to fight to regroup subjectively revolutionary elements who were now growing outside the Comintern.²¹²

In August an I.S. plenum in Paris approved the new orientation, although not without controversy. The majority of the German organization had opposed the call for a new party in Germany. Now the full-time I.S. secretary, Witte, a representative of the Greek Archio-Marxists, voted against the call for the Fourth International, as did Giacomi of the New Italian Opposition. Witte was soon removed from his post. In 1934 the Archio-Marxists split over affiliation to the Trotskyist movement and Witte took a minority into the centrist London Bureau. The French Jewish Group also opposed the turn and split from the Ligue. The NOI disintegrated and some of its leading elements joined the Jewish Group to form a new organization, Union Communiste.²¹³

The rest of the ILO moved ahead energetically to implement the turn, initiating "The Declaration of Four," a call for the Fourth International jointly issued by the ILO and three centrist groups, the German Socialist Workers Party (SAP), the Independent Socialist Party of Holland (OSP), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland (RSP).²¹⁴ The declaration was addressed to a joint meeting of Socialist and Communist parties in Paris in August 1933. In September, to reflect its new tasks, the ILO changed its name to the International Communist League. The CLA National Committee unanimously endorsed the new orientation, which was discussed in the individual branches and approved in early September.²¹⁵ Later that month, the *Militant* published the CLA's call for a new revolutionary working-class party in the United States.

The turn toward building a new party, which occurred simultaneously with an upturn in the American class struggle, opened new possibilities for growth and laid the basis for a resolution of the CLA's destructive factional polarization. The two League factions signed a "Peace Treaty" in July 1933, agreeing to dissolve themselves. But the documents we publish illustrate that internal tensions continued into fall 1933. Only due to Cannon's withdrawal of the plan to move the League headquarters to Chicago did

the Trotskyists avoid the danger of a “cold split” advocated by Shachtman and Abern (who planned to stay in New York while the rest of the leadership moved to Chicago). Nonetheless, by early 1934 B.J. Field was complaining of the “Cannon-Shachtman leadership”—the first linking of the two names inside the Trotskyist movement since 1929.²¹⁶ The PRL introduction to Shachtman’s “Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?” describes the realignments that occurred in the CLA in 1934, as Shachtman and a few of his supporters such as Lewit and Bleeker came over to political collaboration with the core of the Cannon faction.

The united Trotskyists went on to lead the Minneapolis strikes and fuse with Muste’s leftward-moving centrist organization to found the Workers Party of the United States (WPUS) in November-December 1934. The WPUS cadre entered the U.S. Socialist Party in 1936 and won substantial support, especially among the youth; when the Trotskyists were expelled in mid-1937, they had doubled their membership. The SWP, founded on New Year’s Day 1938, included a core of experienced trade-unionists who looked to Cannon, and a real component of intellectuals such as James Burnham, who gravitated toward Shachtman. Burnham and Shachtman were co-editors of the SWP theoretical journal, *New International*.

The SWP was tempered in the fight against Shachtman and Burnham’s repudiation of the unconditional military defense of the USSR as World War II began. Due to its location in North America and the strength of its leadership, the SWP was the only Trotskyist organization internationally to emerge from the war relatively unscathed. Later, Cannon led the fight, partial and belated as it was, against the revisionist current of Michel Pablo that destroyed the Fourth International in 1951-53.²¹⁷

Prescient and Equivocal

In historical overview the CLA’s factional polarization in 1931-33 is both equivocal and prescient: equivocal, because a split in the absence of programmatic differentiation would likely have destroyed the basis for the development of the American Trotskyists, and prescient because in every aspect other than the decisive one—program—the lineup in 1931-33 presaged the key 1939-40 struggle over the Russian question. In his draft reply to “Prospect and Retrospect” Cannon wrote of the petty-bourgeois

methods of the Shachtman group in terms almost identical to those he would use in 1939–40:

On our side one can trace the insistent effort to put in the foreground the most important and actual questions which require definite decisions at the moment, namely the international question and the question of the New York branch, which is organically connected with it. On the side of the Shachtman group there has been, as their controversial documents show, a constant attempt to *shift* the discussion away from these actual disputes to secondary, incidental, outlived, and personal questions which do not require a decision at the moment and concerning which they do not even demand a decision....The Bolshevik method—which puts all questions first of all politically—and the petty-bourgeois method—which construes every dispute primarily as a personal one—are mutually exclusive. They cannot live together.²¹⁸

When the Shachtman-Burnham opposition broke from the Fourth International, they claimed the “real” issue was not the USSR, but Cannon’s “bureaucratic conservatism,” using terms very similar to those in “Prospect and Retrospect.”²¹⁹ Like the early Shachtman faction, the 1939–40 petty-bourgeois opposition was an unprincipled personal combination. Though united in their desire to reject the Fourth International’s program of unconditional military defense of the USSR, Burnham, Shachtman, and Abern maintained different theoretical views on the class nature of the Soviet state.

In both 1932 and 1939–40 Shachtman and his supporters were cavalier about the revolutionary party’s relationship to the proletariat. Shachtman’s opposition to Cannon’s “opportunist” work around the Progressive Miners of America had a direct parallel in the “Auto Crisis,” which preceded by a few months the 1939 fight on the Russian question. While Cannon was in Europe in early 1939 Shachtman and Burnham tried to force the SWP’s fraction in the United Auto Workers, the party’s only major implantation in the CIO, to support the bureaucratic clique led by Homer Martin against a Stalinist-supported faction in the union leadership. Yet Martin wanted to take the UAW back to the craft-dominated AFL, while the Stalinists were solidly in the industrial union camp. The pro-Martin line pushed by Burnham and Shachtman would have discredited the Trotskyists in the UAW, and it was rightly resisted by the fraction.²²⁰ Shachtman’s actions in the Auto Crisis severely damaged his authority in the party.

Flippancy toward the proletariat was coupled with fundamental dilettantism in matters of organization. After Spector's major blowout with Cannon in late 1929, he returned to Toronto and began studying law, willfully withdrawing from the national leadership. He remained active in the Toronto branch, but he repeatedly failed to send promised articles to the *Militant* and refused appeals by Shachtman and Trotsky that he return to New York to take up a more central role.²²¹ Glotzer and Abern also withdrew after the May 1930 plenum. In a fit of pique Shachtman quit as *Militant* editor in early 1932 and refused, despite repeated entreaties, to take up the post again until after the June plenum. Such egoistic, personalist behavior is intolerable in a Bolshevik leader.

Similarly, Glotzer decided to move back to Chicago just as he, Shachtman, and Abern were about to become a majority on the New York resident committee due to the failure of Cannon's co-optation proposal. Glotzer's departure was accepted without protest by his faction, showing the unseriousness of their claim that Cannon and Swabeck were a "conservative" danger to the League. *Shachtman et al. did not want to take full organizational and political responsibility for the work of the League.* Abern withdrew from organizational responsibility in the CLA in late 1933 through 1934 as Shachtman began to work closely with Cannon.

The petty-bourgeois opposition in 1939-40 was similarly dilettantish on organizational questions. A few months before the fight broke out, Shachtman tried to refuse the post of editor of the party's journal, saying that he needed for financial reasons to get a job outside the party.²²² Cannon fought repeatedly with Burnham to quit his job as a philosophy professor at New York University and become a full-time party worker; his refusal was the statement of a petty bourgeois unwilling to come over all the way to the proletariat. Burnham broke with his erstwhile factional allies and quit the Marxist movement just a few weeks after the Workers Party was founded in May 1940. He was not alone. Fully one-half of the approximately 800 Shachtman supporters did not join the Workers Party and exited Marxist politics altogether, a telling comment on the petty-bourgeois and demoralized basis of the opposition.

In 1940 the petty-bourgeois opposition won the overwhelming majority of the SWP's youth organization; in 1931-33 Shachtman et al. had a strong base of support in the CLA youth. Abern was the head of the National Youth Committee set up by

the CLA at its Second National Conference to oversee the youth clubs formed around the launching of *Young Spartacus*. In Minneapolis the only Shachtman supporters were youth around Carl Cowl. The “Carter group,” centered in the New York youth leadership, was nominally independent of both major factions but in practice blocked with Shachtman/Abern on every important issue. This was true despite Carter’s initial opposition to establishing the youth clubs along Leninist lines—organizationally independent of the League, but politically subordinate. Carter wanted the clubs to include Lovestoneites and Socialists and not to expressly affiliate with the CLA.²²³ Shachtman and Abern, former leaders of the Communist Party’s youth organization and familiar with Leninist youth-party relations, at least fought Carter on this issue.

According to “Prospect and Retrospect,” Cannon initially opposed establishing independent youth clubs. There is no record of this in the resident committee minutes. However, Cannon certainly came to disapprove of the youth clubs as organized. The young cadre who were closest to him—Gordon and Clarke—were sent into the field to act as itinerant party organizers on the model of the old Wobblies instead of organizing support for their faction in the youth clubs. Rightly condemning petty-bourgeois dabbling and hyper-intellectualism in the youth, the Cannon faction did not pay enough attention to training and winning youth cadre. Oehler took the more proletarian-oriented youth out of the Trotskyist movement on an ultraleft trajectory in 1935. Thus there was little counterposition to Shachtman-Abern-Burnham in the SWP’s youth organization, the Young People’s Socialist League-Fourth Internationalist (YPSL-4th). The unemployed youth who formed the core of that organization were a protean mass without an inwardly defined class identity, keenly susceptible to petty-bourgeois social pressures.

In both 1931–33 and 1940 the core of Shachtman’s support was to be found in the New York local organization. But the political milieus from which the CLA recruited in this most cosmopolitan of American cities were very different in the early part of the decade from those of the latter half. The core of the CLA’s New York membership had been politically shaped by the overlapping political milieus of the city’s vibrant immigrant working class. The restrictive immigration quotas adopted by the U.S.

Congress in 1924 strangled those milieus at their source. The Depression later cut into the city's light industrial base, the source of many union jobs. By 1939-40 the young recruits to YPSL-4th, many the sons and daughters of immigrant workers, had petty-bourgeois aspirations, if not origins.

In later years Glotzer insisted that the CLA's Shachtman faction was defined not by its New York social base, but by the Jewish origins of many of its members. Thus he was quick to explain Cowl's support to the Shachtman side with the remark, "He was Jewish."²²⁴ Glotzer's assertion of some kind of shared Jewish solidarity on the part of the CLA's Shachtman faction is belied by its vicious campaign to railroad Cannon supporter Bernard Morgenstern out of the League simply because he agreed to be married by a rabbi! There were Jewish members on both sides of the CLA's factional divide. In fact Cowl appears to have been a consistent ultraleftist—his 1932 polemic against the "opportunism" of Cannon's Minneapolis supporters reveals the same political impulses that induced him to follow Oehler out of the Trotskyist movement a few years later.²²⁵

The main dividing line in 1939-40 was not ethnicity, but *class*. Thus Bleeker and Lewit were key factional operatives for Shachtman during the 1931-33 fight; when they toured the U.S. to set up *Unser Kampf* clubs in late 1932, their trip was also an organizing effort for their faction.²²⁶ But the Jewish garment worker milieu in which *Unser Kampf* sought roots was a far cry from the petty-bourgeois circles that formed the Trotskyist youth later in the decade, as Trotsky himself noted in 1937:

You have, for example, an important number of Jewish nonworker elements in your ranks. They can be a very valuable yeast if the party succeeds by and by in extracting them from a closed milieu and tying them to the factory workers by daily activity. I believe such an orientation would also assure a more healthy atmosphere inside the party.²²⁷

In 1939-40 Bleeker and Lewit were stalwarts of the SWP majority; Lewit became one of Cannon's central political collaborators for the next two decades.

In a discussion with Swabeck ("The International Must Apply the Brakes," 27 February 1933), Trotsky noted that the different social composition of the Cannon and Shachtman groups was not a barrier to the building of a revolutionary party:

The mere fact that both factions have a different social composition and different traditions is not enough to necessitate a split, since every party arises from various groups, elements, etc., is not socially homogeneous, and is a melting pot. But there must be active work. In the League the current situation coincides with the beginning of more energetic external work. Whether the League will become a melting pot through this work—that is the question that counts.

But the American Trotskyist organization never really became a melting pot. The CLA's factional polarization left a fault line, centered on the Abern clique, which ruptured again in 1939–40. At that time Shachtman gave *programmatic expression* to the political impulses that had earlier led him to sympathize with petty-bourgeois adventurers such as Landau and Naville, and with those who sought unity with the Right Opposition, such as Nin. Under the pressure of the anti-Communist hysteria provoked by the Hitler-Stalin pact, Shachtman chose to follow the impressionistic pedant James Burnham—the co-editor of *New International* and his closest collaborator in the preceding period—instead of the proletarian revolutionary James Cannon. This was not the inevitable denouement of the 1931–33 fight, but the result of subsequent political developments within the American Trotskyist organization and in the world at large.

In 1939 Shachtman took the majority of the petty-bourgeois elements of the party, his historic base, but Cannon took the proletarian majority. Not only were the programmatic issues clear, but the Socialist Workers Party was more deeply rooted in the working class than the CLA had been. As Cannon noted:

It was the “turn to mass work,” started in 1933, which in the end sealed the doom of the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1940. The new people recruited and the cadres selected in the process of developing the mass work of the party shifted the weight steadily against the “internal” specialists of whom Abern was the archetype. By 1939–40 we had a different and better composition of the party membership to appeal to. This was decisive.²²⁸

Cannon brilliantly exposed the personalist, petty-bourgeois character of Shachtman-Abern-Glotzer's political approach in *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*. He subsequently wrote:

Note Trotsky's analysis of Shachtman's tendency, not by a single incident but by a long series over a long period of years. Lineups are a certain indication. Shachtman lined up with Naville, Landau, Nin, etc., in the most critical situations in the formative period of

the Left Opposition. He was never convinced but yielded to the joint pressure of LD [Trotsky] and our own party majority.

His first manifestation of political *independence* took the form of opposition to us, and every *independent* step thereafter. His position was a simulacrum of Bolshevism when he worked under the influence of others. His own instinctive tendency is always opportunist. For example, he never could fully understand why we would hear nothing of unity, or even a united front, with the Lovestoneites. His unification with us (1933) after four years of falsely motivated factional struggle was made unwillingly, under compulsion: the disintegration of his faction and the pressure of LD.²²⁹

The history of international working-class struggle in the 20th century proves that, as Lenin insisted, revolutionary socialist consciousness must be brought to the working class from the outside by a steeled vanguard. Internal programmatic struggle within the vanguard party is key to overcoming the inevitable pressures of the more privileged layers of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie on the vanguard and its revolutionary program. Through the fight in the CLA in 1931-33 Cannon completed his assimilation of these basic tenets of Bolshevism. He became a master at applying them to the American terrain, and proved to be the best Leninist the United States has yet produced.

The lessons for new generations of revolutionaries are profound. While the revolutionary character of a proletarian organization is defined by its program, which represents nothing other than the historic interests of the international working class, there is an interplay between a party's program and its social composition. Marx insisted that "being determines consciousness," and this applies as much to aspiring revolutionaries as to other sectors of society. A Marxist vanguard without deep roots in the working class not only lacks the means to implement its program, but is necessarily more susceptible to the social pressures of alien classes.

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I.

Shachtman in the International

The April Conference: A Disappointment in All Respects

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²³⁰

16 April 1930

This criticism of the April 1930 Paris conference of the International Left Opposition is a response to an April 3 letter by Shachtman reporting on the founding conference of the German Left Opposition, which Shachtman attended before going to Paris.²³¹ The Italian group referred to is Prometeo, supporters of the ultraleftist Amadeo Bordiga. The Belgian representatives at the April conference were split between supporters of the Charleroi federation and the Brussels organization around Eduard Van Overstraeten.

My belated thanks for your detailed report on the Berlin events. At any rate the picture you paint was not very rosy. Now I am told, with reference to Seipold, that the situation has taken a turn for the better. I have expressed to our friends in Berlin quite frankly my suspicion that there may be some agents of the official Party bureaucracy in their midst, who are pursuing their unholy work as splitters. Moreover, I believe that this mode of operation would be wholly in the spirit of Stalinist bureaucratic practices and that one must be on the alert for it everywhere, including in America.

Now on the international conference: It is a big disappointment for me in all respects. To convene a *mute* international conference was really not advisable. If our opponents are even halfway clever—and in this direction they are quite inventive—they will immediately and openly conclude: The assembled representatives of the Opposition were so disunited, or so unclear, or both together, that they did not even dare express any political thought at all. Because nobody, no politically thinking person, will be able to believe that people come to Paris from New York, Berlin, Prague, Spain, etc., in order to say nothing. Travel expenses for silence are really superfluous expenses in politics. It would take only four to five postcards, nothing

more, to create a secretariat. Of course, one can say that the majority of delegates were in Paris anyway. But the reader of the official communiqués does not know this, and it changes absolutely nothing in substance.

So why was no short declaration of principles (manifesto) published? Why? Such a document would be of the utmost political significance. You could show it to every thinking worker in every country and on that basis do propaganda work for the international Opposition. It must always be kept in mind that most of the national groups are rather weak, without tradition, without authority among the workers, which initially presents great obstacles and difficulties. Reference is made to the Russian Opposition, which to the worker appears rather abstract. This reference is often given a personal edge, which is politically in every respect uncomfortable and impermissible in principle. A worker who generally sympathizes with the Opposition, but who does not yet place sufficient trust in the national group, would breathe a sigh of relief if one were to lay before him a concise, clear, principled document. And we have robbed ourselves of this weapon for an unforeseeable period of time. What are the reasons? Comrade Naville, in a hastily written letter, names but one: the failure of the Italians and the half-failure of the Belgians. But I can by no means accept this argument. We convened a conference in order to give expression to the ideas of those groups that are clear about the issues, not those who persist in their confusion. In any event, the Italians were not officially represented, and the Belgians were split. Thus the manifesto could have been adopted unanimously or against the vote of one Belgian. One could object that we did not want to repel the representatives from Brussels. That I would understand even less, for they are in a struggle against the comrades from Charleroi, to whom we are committed to give our complete support. I also consider the wait-and-see "forbearance" toward the Italians to be completely false. If we had posed the alternatives to the Italians through articles and open questioning, we would presently be much further along with them than we unfortunately are.

It must be admitted that we already lost too much time before the conference. The secretariat should have been constituted at least half a year ago. Urbahns would never have been

able to come off as relatively well as he did in his organization if, in the last half year, he had been under a certain amount of control by the international Opposition, and if the members of the Leninbund had understood that it really is a matter of a break with the entire international Opposition. Because of this utterly inexplicable delay we helped Urbahns against us, just as we are now helping the muddleheads among the Belgians, Italians, and elsewhere through our mute conference (thus will it go down in history).

I insist on this because I sense tendencies in this important question that are not in agreement with the active, revolutionary internationalism of the Opposition, and if they are not clarified and eliminated in a timely fashion, they can become dangerous.

In a formal sense as well, the affair is not quite in order, if I am not mistaken, and here, my dear Shachtman, I indict you directly. Through your friendly mediation I addressed proposals to the conference. But the conference never learned of them. Who then decided behind the back of the conference that an important proposal, addressed to the conference, should not even be brought before it? It seems to me that this is not quite “democratic” toward the conference itself. What is really undemocratic—without quotation marks—is that 99 percent, if not more, of the membership of the international Opposition, if asked, would doubtlessly be for the adoption of a manifesto of this sort. Moreover, a referendum on this question would not be so difficult at all, for we are unfortunately not yet very numerous. Thus it seems to me that the entire procedure is politically utterly wrong and organizationally a bit arbitrary.

What you tell me, on comrade Pfemfert’s authority, about the alleged suggestions regarding the publication of the biography in Yiddish is a misunderstanding. We are dealing with a sum that is ten times more modest than what you cite in your letters. I am very sorry that the *Militant’s* profit will be much smaller than you imagined because of this misunderstanding.²³²

I gratefully acknowledge receiving comrade Martin Abern’s letter with his important communications.²³³

I received a very kind letter from Harry Winitsky and am sending him the enclosed reply, with your help.²³⁴ Unfortunately

I must also write this in German. If your consul thinks the reply is unadvisable, do not deliver it, but communicate the practical contents verbally.



Where Is the International Secretariat?

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²³⁵

18 August 1930

Trotsky's complaint about the functioning of the I.S. is a response to a June 30 letter by Shachtman that chided Trotsky for issuing his own circular letter to the ILO sections.²³⁶ Trotsky addresses the crisis in the French section, which within a few months was to lead to Alfred Rosmer's withdrawal from the Opposition. The new Italian group he refers to is the New Italian Opposition, which broke from the Italian Communist Party in solidarity with the ILO in early 1930.

1. It is of course very regrettable that the *Militant* has had to revert to a biweekly. In any case this is not catastrophic. I am a bit worried, however, about a purely technical symptom that sometimes also has political significance. The proofreading of the most recent issue is miserable. This may be completely accidental, of course, but sometimes this is a sign of demoralization in the editorial board, and sometimes a crisis in the organization begins with neglect of detail work. I am sure that this is not the case in the "League."
2. I regret that nothing came of all our financial plans. The Yiddish edition of my autobiography was completely botched by Rieder. As I see, you have also not been able to place chapters of the new book in the non-English press. Scribner's writes me that the crisis has sharply impaired sales of the autobiography to date. To date he has sold only 4,000 copies.
3. On the French Opposition: The communications on the crisis that have reached you seem to be very exaggerated. Rosmer has not resigned. He is now on vacation and will return to his post again in a couple of weeks. At any rate, the dispute, as

always, has left a bitter aftertaste, but I believe that in time its positive consequences will outweigh the negative ones. Some questions have been clarified by the crisis; some positions have been made more precise. The work of the "Ligue" has not been obstructed; it continues, and with success. We expect comrade Molinier here shortly; Naville is coming later. I will then be able to give you more concrete information about personal matters. However, I believe that the crisis has basically been overcome, politically as well as personally.

4. The international work is in much worse shape. All of my efforts to find out what was actually decided at the April conference have yielded no satisfactory results, because, as I understand it, no formal decisions were made at this conference and no minutes were taken. (Comrade Frankel corrects me in this respect by noting that detailed minutes and written resolutions must exist.) At any rate I have not received them to date. The April conference was more or less a misunderstanding. The work was summarily pushed off onto the French Ligue without detailing a division of labor, for, the political manifesto aside, at least organizational-technical matters should be thoroughly carried out. I insist on this because I very much fear that on the national level there is a great deal of similar sloppiness that damages the cause enormously. Bureaucratism also has its good side: precision, punctuality, precise resolutions, etc. The Opposition should begin to acquire this side of "bureaucratism."

5. You write that actually the International Secretariat should decide the question of my circular letter. You maintain, not incorrectly, that the secretariat was in fact created for such a purpose. Yes, it should be that way. But, as I have said, despite at least a dozen letters I have not even been able to learn what the actual decisions were. There were certain shadings of opinion with regard to a number of international questions. These shadings are absolutely unavoidable, and to a certain extent they constitute a driving force. However, there must be an organization that passes over from discussion of shadings to decision and to action. I had hoped to find the road to this in Paris—with your collaboration, dear Shachtman. But because this was not the case, there was no other way than to turn to the Opposition directly and, through its public opinion, create a clear

situation. At any rate, by means of the circular letter I achieved what I had been unable to achieve by means of innumerable personal letters. An independent editorial board of the *International Bulletin* has now been created, and I am expecting the first issue any day.

6. You write that my circular will be communicated to the members of the leadership. Of course you know better how to proceed in America. But in principle I believe that we should proceed as democratically as possible. What we have in the ranks of the Opposition are cadres; they must be trained, fully capable of acting on their own. This will not happen by their believing in a powerful International Secretariat but by their participation in all questions and actions, which will gradually lead to the creation of a capable center.

7. On the Bordigists: In the last issue of *Lutte des classes* you will find the most important documents that illuminate the situation of the two groups of the Italian Opposition. Relations with the Paris Bordigists are somewhat tense. The situation would be better if in this question as well one had not acted somewhat undemocratically—that is, if the negotiations at the top had long ago been supplemented by educating all the French and Italian Oppositionists. Nothing forces leaders to precisely define their ideas and actions so much as being under observation and thus controlled by the public opinion of those being led. This rule is not only applicable to the Stalinists but to us as well. This should never be forgotten.

The new Italian group is very active and possesses, it seems, capable and trained forces. We plan to have both groups represented in the International Secretariat by one comrade; in the worst case, by two. If the Parisian Bordigists were less sectarian, they would have to hail the new Opposition as their political success. Unfortunately, they attribute much significance to maintaining their position as an oppositional aristocracy at any price.

At any rate, I do not believe that you have to change your attitude toward the New York Bordigists in any way. In my opinion, however, you must open wide the discussion of the disputed issues in the organization, including in front of the Bordigists, on the basis of the material in the last issue of *Lutte des classes*.

8. On the united front of the three Communist organizations.²³⁷

Of course, it is out of the question for us to make any kind of bloc with the Right in which the Party does not participate. The most important thing in Gitlow's letter is the recognition that his organization differs from the Party tactically, but from us programmatically. In other words, despite all the claims of the Stalinists, the Right recognizes that they are much closer to the centrists than to us. This must be utilized politically. Winitsky sent me the major resolution on "Trotskyism" from the national conference of the Right. It is nine pages long; I have only skimmed it. I will comment on this in an article in the near future. The fact that you have forced these people to make their standpoint precise is in itself a great gain for us.

9. I am turning the matters of the Russian Bulletin over to Lyova since that is his department. He will be writing you about it.

10. Received the line intact. Maestro Charalambos tried it out and found it to be excellent. I hope that American technology will live up to its reputation in the coming season.²³⁸



Shachtman to Be Part of International Bureau

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²³⁹

17 November 1930

In addition to reporting on the decision to co-opt Shachtman to the International Bureau, Trotsky here congratulates the CLA on the production of a pamphlet containing his article "The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany." He refers to the situation in Austria, where both the Arbeiterstimme group, led by Joseph Frey, and the Mahnruf Group, founded by German Opposition leader Kurt Landau, claimed membership in the ILO while refusing to unite.

The little pamphlet caused a big sensation here. A nice press run and, even more important, a very good translation as far as I can judge. The French translation in *La Vérité* is full of mistakes, the German inadequate, the American very good. You

now have a translator in the person of comrade Morris Lewit. I congratulate you on this acquisition. I found only a single misunderstanding on the last page, where in the sentence: "It especially overlooked the economic *crisis*," it should read "*prosperity*." Please send the pamphlet to Ivor Montagu, 80 Wardour St., London W1.

A few words about the situation in Austria. I do not know whether you receive the two competing journals. Their polemics are apt to make the international Opposition ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of the workers. Meanwhile, a year and a half of protracted effort to bring the comrades to their senses has passed, without success. I had the impression the entire time that Mahruf leads an artificial existence but hoped to bring about a unification with comrade Landau's help. Comrade Frankel is writing you at the same time about the facts based on a comprehensive inquiry by two comrades who had traveled to Austria from here.²⁴⁰ Comrade Landau took an absolutely wrong position on this issue. Enclosed you will find his letter, my reply, and my proposal to the International Bureau. All this material will be sent to you as a member of the International Bureau. Because of a technical oversight, the matter has not been settled, but de facto it is settled. While Naville was here we (M. Mill, Molinier, Markin, Frankel, and I) proposed to make you part of the International Bureau as representative of the American League, on the assumption that the League appointed you to handle international relations. Your participation—at least until you have three to four Lindberghs [transatlantic flyers]—was conceived as follows: a. You will receive all material intended for the members of the International Bureau; b. You of course will participate in all votes; c. In issues more or less urgent for Europe they will not wait for your vote. In American matters, of course, everything will be determined only with your participation. Comrade Frankel is now proceeding to arrange this matter formally.

I receive everything from the Mexican comrades in New York and am very pleased with their energy and abilities.²⁴¹ A small and even an old mimeograph can accomplish wonderful things if you are on the right track and pursue matters energetically, which seems to be the case here in particular. I would write to

the comrades immediately but am not sure whether they are fluent in foreign languages besides English and Spanish.

I received a letter from comrade Malkin, sent to the address of the Russian Bulletin from the Great Meadows Prison. Do you know this comrade? If so, please convey to him my warmest greetings.²⁴²

I am sending you a letter from Australia that I have had a long time. I have not been able to decide whether to answer the correspondent, because I am not sure whether it isn't a trap. Perhaps you or Eastman can find a way to feel out the man. Of course it would be good to have someone in Australia. Perhaps you could use him for the *Militant* or other things. If the man is okay, send the letter back to me and I will answer it. I would also be willing to send him a copy of my autobiography in English.

My letter to Lore written when you were here was returned "addressee unknown." Subsequently I sent the letter for you to forward but never heard anything more. What is the state of it? Did you deliver the letter? I also do not know whether comrade Spector in Canada received the letter that I wrote jointly with you.

The people from the *Weekly People* wrote me a rather friendly letter a few months ago and have been sending me their paper since then.²⁴³ In any case I have not replied, which of course is not very polite. But I do not want to take any formal step that could cause the slightest harm to the *Militant*. What should I write them? I await your advice.



Crisis in the French Ligue

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁴⁴

25 November 1930

The latent crisis in the French Ligue has again suddenly become acute, and now the point is for everyone to take a position. You know that Naville and Mill spent quite a while with us, that we discussed all the disputed issues in more than enough detail, and then thoroughly determined the necessary measures. N. was quite sure that he would have difficulties with some comrades, particularly comrade Rosmer, but he was completely prepared to overcome the difficulties together with the others. In his parting words, quite spontaneously he said he would conduct an open, undiplomatic correspondence. Since his departure he has not written me one line. The second issue of the *International Bulletin*, which we jointly put together here and which should have appeared in Paris only a few days later, has not been published to this day. The provisional Administrative Secretariat that we established together does not function because it is boycotted by Naville. Despite all of comrade Molinier's attempts to ensure collaborative work, nothing happens, thanks to Naville's continual resistance.

Now, this situation is not merely, or—if you will—not in the final analysis, caused by Naville's bad faith, but by new complications that outweigh all else. You know from your own experience how organizational matters are handled in Paris. You, my dear friend, also contributed something to this sloppy functioning and then rebuked me later, after the April conference, for not having published my circular through the *International Bulletin* and the secretariat, at a time when, despite all efforts, it was impossible in Paris to initiate any international work. But that only parenthetically. In French affairs the work was just as confused and perhaps even more sloppily organized, particularly in the most important arena: trade-union work. The entire responsibility for propagating Communist ideas inside the trade

unions has fallen to comrade Gourget personally: no directives, no control, no regular reporting. In letters to Rosmer, Naville, and Gourget himself I repeatedly expressed my astonishment at this method of work and urgently advocated collective work in this important area, but to no avail. The reason for my concern was also the way comrade Gourget approaches things and people. He prefers a diplomatic-personal method over principled, propagandistic, and, if required, polemical education. I am not at all against the art of individual diplomacy, but it cannot replace programmatic work. For this reason, I considered comrade Gourget to be invaluable as a member of a trade-union commission, which, of course, should be completely subordinated to the leadership of the Ligue. But since Naville, Rosmer, and the others soft-pedaled considerably for the sake of the substanceless internal struggle, they found no opportunity to place matters on a normal track. When Naville was here I underscored this sticky point most energetically and predicted that Gourget's personal character, coupled with his complete independence from the Ligue in this most important arena, could have very nasty consequences. Unfortunately, this has proved to be the case much sooner than I imagined.

The conference of the "Opposition Unitaire" was to have been held in Paris on November 20. Gourget undertook to work out theses together with a semi-Communist who stands outside the Ligue. What he produced is a political/trade-union platform cobbled together from syndicalist, Communist, and reformist fragments. One sees clearly where the good Gourget, out of consideration for his partner and diplomatic politeness, has thrown overboard one Communist principle after the other, while, for the same reasons, incorporating into the document one prejudice after another. I will ask comrade Frankel to write out at least the most important parts (the document is enormous) and enclose them with this letter. I have written a short critique, unfortunately in Russian. But I am enclosing it; perhaps you now have someone who can translate it into English for you. If the document had been produced by non-Communist trade unionists halfway friendly to the Ligue, a friendly, principled criticism of the mess would be in order. I would gladly do this for *La Vérité*, with a tone of complete friendliness toward the confused authors. But it is absolutely out of the question

that a Communist, a member of the Ligue, should sign his name to it, that Communists organized in the trade unions should vote for it, let alone that we, as the International Opposition, should take responsibility for it.

These theses, as I have said, were produced completely behind the back of the leadership. Comrade Gourget made his document available only upon comrade Molinier's plea and then reluctantly. Both Naville and Gérard, not to mention Molinier, Frank, and others, had to recognize immediately that the platform is unacceptable. That immediately induced comrade Gourget to submit his resignation, with the written explanation that the Ligue wanted to subordinate the trade-union opposition to itself—that is, the same accusation that the syndicalists are wont to raise against the Communists, albeit with the difference that here it is not at all a question of the “subordination” of the trade-union opposition, at least temporarily, but rather of the Ligue's control over a member who has been entrusted with its trade-union work.

Since then Naville's attitude has been so wavering and ambiguous that he, as I mentioned, does not dare write me a few lines, although I, always expecting his letter, was engaged in friendly correspondence with his wife during this time. Instead of condemning comrade Gourget's absolutely impermissible method of functioning, he initiated a guerrilla war against Molinier and Mill and is sabotaging the work of the International Secretariat. No one knows what conclusions Naville will draw from the situation, because unfortunately he is not accustomed to being guided by principled and organizational motives, instead of personal and sentimental ones.

It goes without saying that comrade Rosmer's attitude plays the greatest role here. It is difficult for me to touch on this delicate point, but the issue stands above the individual, even if one is dealing with an old friend. With one brief exception, comrade Rosmer never belonged to a large political organization. Like Monatte, he was active in the framework of an intimate anarcho-syndicalist group that never took on strict forms of organization and always remained a loose federation of individual characters. I often admired the meetings of this organization, Quai Jemmapes 96 (the old headquarters of *La Vie Ouvrière*): no agenda, no minutes, an informal exchange of

opinion, no resolutions; they dispersed, and they all did as they pleased, or they did nothing. And so it went from week to week, for years. The way the April conference was organized (to be sure, with your collaboration, my dear friend), represents the transmittal of the same habits and methods into the Left Opposition. That also explains why Rosmer found it quite normal that Gourget, on his own responsibility, without an accounting to anyone, ran nothing more and nothing less than all the trade-union work. You also know that after his expulsion from the Party, Rosmer stood completely outside the movement for years. Now, one must take into consideration that he is a sick man who can maintain his physical equilibrium only by leading a very quiet life. He is happy working in a group of good friends but cannot bear internal conflicts at all, reacting in such cases by leaving the field to the combatants.

After the April conference the International Secretariat under Rosmer's leadership could not begin its work, because Overstraeten had objections, because Naville had some doubts, and because Rosmer had absolutely no desire to struggle against the false objections and the no less false doubts. The same story was later repeated with the Bordigists, to whom I addressed an open letter that Rosmer refused to publish in *La Vérité*, knowing that this would cause no friction with me but would avoid new complications with the Bordigists.²⁴⁵ I hope you will understand that I am not complaining to you about Rosmer. I merely want to acquaint you with those character traits of his that explain his attitude in the current crisis.

If I had freedom of movement I would go to Paris immediately to have a talk with my old friend. Unfortunately this is denied me. Thus I have urgently asked comrade Rosmer to come to Prinkipo again in order to seek a clarification of the situation together. No matter how this personal aspect will develop, the general situation in the Ligue—that is, the character of the crisis—is completely clear. The Ligue is on the road to transforming itself from a small propagandistic group with a familial character into a public organization in which habits are less intimate, relations and obligations have a more formal character, and conflicts are sometimes brutal. Politically, this means great progress, which is also very clearly expressed by the development of *La Vérité*. Now comrade Rosmer seems to find

the unavoidable negative aspects of this progress unbearable, and this explains the personal case of Rosmer.

As far as Naville is concerned, one should not forget that, with all his good and promising traits, he belonged to *Révolution surréaliste* as late as 1927, later worked on *Clarté*, and still stood between the right and left wing until the autumn of 1929 in close connection with Souvarine. These are not rebukes. Naville is quite young, comes from a bourgeois milieu, and makes his way not without inhibitions and disruptions. Marxist theoretical education does not substitute for revolutionary training in the proletarian milieu, and that is precisely what Naville and the *Lutte des classes* group both lack. He accepts the correct standpoint in principle; but then in dealing with a practical question, quite different factors—individualistic, even national ones—come to the fore and make the choice difficult for him, sometimes even forcing him onto the wrong track. These non-proletarian traits that he has not overcome are so strongly pronounced that one can almost always predict what kind of error he will make in this or that question. I repeat again that his errors become all the more unavoidable the less they are theoretical—that is, purely theoretical—and the more they embrace practical and personal questions. So is it now, as he has begun to waver because of Gourget's impermissible attitude and tries to exert pressure not on Gourget but on those who are entirely correct. In doing so he naturally enlarges the scope of the crisis, because one can overcome the wavering of others only if one does not waver oneself.

Today I wrote Naville a letter, a copy of which is enclosed.²⁴⁶ At the same time I wrote comrade Mill, who is the liaison to the Russian Opposition in Paris, that the secretariat's work, in my opinion, must not be interrupted for a single day; he should go to comrade Souza and together they should energetically demand of comrade Naville that he not neglect his obligations to the international Opposition despite the crisis in the French Ligue.

These are all unpleasant side effects. It would be better if they did not exist. But to fall into despair over them or even into a pessimistic mood would be utter folly. For despite everything we have come a long way in the course of this year, and these crises no longer grow out of the old, unfortunate stagna-

tion of the foreign Opposition groups but rather out of their development, transformation, and growth.

This letter is meant for you personally, not because I have something to hide here but because comrades who are not acquainted with the personal aspects might not interpret this letter in the spirit in which it has been written.

If you want to know my opinion about your attitude, I will give you the following advice: Do not support comrade Naville's wavering or even go easy on him, but prove to him most emphatically that beginning with the key trade-union question he must orient himself according to principle and not according to personal motives. If this side is secured, together we will do everything to avoid losing even our dear Gourget, because he is a very good comrade, very smart, and some of his traits that prove to be weaknesses in an inadequate organization could serve the international Opposition excellently if put to proper use.

PS: In my letter to Naville you will find an allusion to comrade Landau's preparations for the German conference. I do not know whether you are informed about this. The conference was supposed to take place five days after the elections—that is, at a point when nothing had yet been clarified. The date was announced suddenly, so that I personally had to make do with a short letter, which was published in *Kommunist*. At the last minute the conference was postponed for a few weeks, ostensibly to give the delegates the possibility of taking a position on the elections. That gave me time to write the little pamphlet you published so excellently. I also wrote letters to Landau and Well, asking them to send the international comrades, including me, the draft resolutions. I insisted that my pamphlet be sent to the local organizations in manuscript form as a basis for discussion, which should be an obvious thing to do. None of this was done. No resolutions were prepared for the conference. My pamphlet was published almost at the same time as the American edition. The conference concerned itself exclusively with personal garbage—that is, it was an expanded repeat of the conference you yourself attended. The selection of delegates and the entire way the conference was handled had only one goal: to determine and affirm that not Neumann and Grylewicz, but Landau, was right, without, to be sure, indicating to which great and important questions this right and wrong

refers.²⁴⁷ Before the conference I asked comrade Landau about the preparations and received from him the best assurances that he was proceeding together with Roman Well and would seek to shape the conference into a real, political-revolutionary representative assembly. The delegates, robbed of every political idea, could do nothing other than concede that the leadership was right and, as comrade Seipold admits, go home in an utterly depressed mood without having adopted the slightest political resolution. Comrade Landau regards this as his victory, and I fear that he tempted Naville into trying to achieve such a victory in France. Landau's weaknesses—inarguably he also has his strong sides—are analogous to comrade Naville's, and their alliance therefore rests on a not quite healthy basis. So now you have been informed by me; for now I have nothing more to add.



We Must Endeavor to Collaborate With Naville and Rosmer

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky²⁴⁸

17 December 1930

This is excerpted from a letter about developments in the CLA.

1. It appears to me, from an examination of the situation in various countries, that the Opposition is passing through a critical stage in its development. This is to a certain extent the aftermath of the previous situation in which—so far as the non-Russian Opposition was concerned—it was represented by such groups as Paz and Urbahns, which did us more harm than good. Their mode of work—the one dilettante and the other opportunist-sectarian—has left its mark on the Opposition to this day. The efforts of the past year to issue out of the stagnation caused by this state of affairs naturally had to assume abrupt and sometimes harsh forms, as in the break with Urbahns, Paz, and now with Overstraeten. This was unavoidable and in part advantageous to our cause. It made it impossible for the Stalinist

liars to use the expressed standpoint of the German Opposition against that of the Russian, or that of the French against that of the American, etc. In a word, it laid the basis for establishing a uniform international platform and *centralized organizations* of the Opposition. This work is evidently still proceeding in such countries as Austria, China, and elsewhere.

Because of the whole past of the Opposition, its origin, the traditions (good and bad) of its proponents outside of Russia, the difficulties are still with us to a large extent. To these factors, I believe, should be added the fact that in reacting to the exaggerated internationalism and mechanical centralization of Stalin-Zinoviev, a tendency, largely unconscious, has grown up in the Opposition to ignore the burning needs of centralization, discipline, and the Communist functioning of comrades.

This, together with the reasons you mention, explains the state of affairs among the French comrades. It is obviously an absolutely impossible situation when one of our leading comrades draws up a political declaration not only in collaboration with a non-Communist but without the knowledge or sanction of the executive committee. And particularly when the declaration—at least those parts I have read—is so faulty, untenable, and impossible for us to take responsibility for. In the Party—in its best days—such an action would have met with immediate repudiation and, if serious enough, with strenuous disciplinary measures. I cannot understand how Naville or any of the other leading comrades can defend such a step, even if the defense consists of centering the attack upon those comrades who first proposed measures against Gourget.

What must be taken into consideration in this regard are certain personal relationships in the leading group of the French Ligue that I remarked during my stay in Paris. For some mysterious reason, there is evidently a very poor regard for each other held mutually by comrades Naville and Molinier. Of the two, of course, I believe Naville to be by far the more capable, despite those shortcomings which you mention. It is all the more distressing, therefore, to have to think of a situation in which Naville and, even more, Rosmer should be in a sort of semi-retirement. Without attaching an exaggerated significance to leaders, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that they play a highly important role. Rosmer and Naville, despite the

peculiar and bad traditions of their respective milieus, are extremely valuable for the movement. Leaders are not made or born or developed overnight, except in the Stalinist factories. A lack of capable leaders is a sure sign of the weakness of a movement. (Our German group is a case in point: Landau and very little more!) And for this reason, while I cannot for a moment condone the attitude the comrades have taken toward the principled question of the Communist standpoint in the trade-union question and the elementary requirements of organizational discipline, I believe the greatest efforts should be made to facilitate a collaboration in which the abilities of both Rosmer and Naville can be utilized to the utmost. These are, in a sense, abstract considerations which may not fit accurately into the realities of the situation in France, nor are they to be understood as negating the analysis you give of the weaknesses of "French organization" or of Naville and Rosmer. But such weaknesses cannot be overcome in 24 hours. Meanwhile I shall write to Naville on my own responsibility.

2. I am glad to learn that the Austrian situation is in the process of liquidation. Here, as in China for instance, I have favored drastic measures in which a unification is either compelled or else one group chosen as a *basis* for the establishment of an Austrian section of the Opposition. Our cause has been sufficiently compromised by the eternal, baseless polemics there to make such an action imperative. I have for a long time had the impression about the two groups there which is verified in the report of comrades Molinier and Mill.²⁴⁹ The Mahnruf Group appears to live largely by attacks upon the *Arbeiterstimme* and Frey, and has been, in the past, falsely supported by Landau in *Der Kommunist* and other non-Austrian Opposition papers. By this I do not mean that Frey has always acted correctly. All the polemics in that country were characteristic of "österreichisierte Politik" [Austrianized politics]. Frey has frequently adopted so violent a position that it became arrogant and, worse than that, attempted to make his whole past record in the Party, for ten years, the basis of a unification of the Opposition. That the unity document elaborated by him does not contain this "pre-requisite" is a good sign, and in consideration of his indubitable qualifications, there does not appear to be any reason why the Mahnrufers should not unite with Frey's group. Of course,

comrade Landau's position in this case is based far more upon the desire to maintain the sectional prestige and honor of his former group than upon a wish for unity. The action of the Molinier-Mill committee is to be endorsed, I believe. Yet I would urge that the International Bureau should endeavor to create a situation in which the Austrian Opposition is no longer dominated so exclusively by comrade Frey, that the leadership be extended, since I am not convinced that he is always capable of taking an objective position particularly in internal organizational affairs.

3. In connection with Landau, the German question arises again apparently. From its press alone, it seems that the group is at a standstill and what you write only confirms that impression. When we were at the Berlin conference, comrades Naville and myself endeavored to establish such a leading committee in which none of the two uniting groups would have *absolute* domination. This not because we had too great a confidence in such people as Joko, but because the German group was obviously lacking in material for leadership, in experienced functionaries, in capable directing forces. Neumann, for instance, despite certain shortcomings, would have been a valuable addition to the leading committee. I cite his name only as an example. Without these two or three former Leninbundler, the committee would have been composed of one leading intellectual force (Landau) and an Austrian to boot, with the balance composed of what amounted to active rank-and-file comrades. I have never found such a combination to work out successfully. Joko, I am sure, had to be removed from the committee, for he is entirely out of place in the Opposition. But the art of leadership, so to speak, should have consisted in drawing closer such elements as Grylewicz and Neumann, so as to broaden and extend the leadership. Their alienation had inevitably to result in the present situation where, according to your letter, the principal task of the recent conference was to bury for the tenth time the political corpses of the former Leninbundler. Not a very heroic task. We call it "flogging a dead dog." Landau had a very vindictive attitude toward Joko-Grylewicz-Neumann and their friends and seemed to think that the group would be far better off if it did not unite with the Leninbund minority. I have a world of respect for comrade Landau's

abilities, but I am afraid that he is another instance of insufficient ability to orientate himself correctly in internal affairs where his own organization is involved.

4. I am happy to accept the proposal for membership on the International Bureau. At its last meeting, our National Committee endorsed my nomination and I presume that I can now begin to serve formally—by mail. Up to now I have received no communications from the bureau or secretariat, excepting what was so kindly furnished to me by comrade Jan Frankel and you. As soon as I can establish connections with comrade Mill I shall endeavor to function on the bureau as actively as the separation of the Atlantic Ocean will permit.



Landau Has Proven to Be a Very Unreliable Fellow

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁵⁰

6 January 1931

Trotsky refers here to Jan Frankel's document "Comrade Landau's Role in the Austrian and German Questions: A Brief Account on the Basis of Documents" of the same date.²⁵¹ Written to provide the leading bodies of the Opposition with a "factual account of the rather strange and dangerous politics that comrade Landau has manifested in the Austrian and German questions," Frankel's treatise sought to illustrate how Landau "uses the international Opposition merely as a decorative shell for his own cliquist politics." Sending the document to Shachtman, Frankel wrote, "We see here that there are comrades who know how to use Marxist phraseology very skillfully, but whose communism is only superficial."²⁵²

According to Frankel, Landau admitted (in response to international criticism) that the program of his former compatriots in the Mahnruf Group was "a miserable and opportunist piece of hack work." Nonetheless, he continued to insist that this was "not decisive for an evaluation of this group." Backing Mahnruf's claims to represent the ILO over those of the rival Frey group, Landau supported Mahnruf's unsubstantiated charge that Frey harbored a police spy. Frankel wrote:

For every observant person, it is clear that the Oppositional groups in Austria have abused, disparaged, ridiculed the ideas of the International Lefts in the most shameful manner. Cleansing the ground in Austria and creating a new, authentically revolutionary group will be most difficult. It must be said openly that Germany runs the danger of developing in the same direction if the international Opposition looks on passively.

The German section's journal Der Kommunist dealt hardly at all with international questions. Landau had shown such a frivolous attitude toward program that he had not released any of the resolutions written for the October 1930 German conference, held shortly after Reichstag elections in which the Nazi vote had sharply increased. Frankel wrote that the conference almost exclusively "dealt with organizational-personal squabbles. What is the political content of these squabbles? What ideas are involved? What permitted the Landau group, which based itself on the authority of the international Opposition and thus played the decisive role in preparing the conference, to point the conference in such a direction at a moment of greatest revolutionary significance?" Landau had trampled on the proletarian principle of proportional representation, turning the conference into "a body for counting up mandates in the manner of the English trade unions." Citing Landau's war against the Leipzig leadership and the expulsions of Neumann, Joko, Grylewicz, and others, as "the crassest excrescences of a bureaucratic regime," Frankel advocated that the international Opposition oversee a democratic internal discussion in the section, including the expelled comrades, culminating in the convocation of a politically prepared German conference. Trotsky proposed similar measures in "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition." Landau broke with the ILO rather than carry out this perspective.

I acknowledge receipt of your new publication, "The Strategy of the World Revolution," which proves that you aspire to become the biggest deluxe publisher in the United States.²⁵³ None of the sections can measure up to you in the splendor of the publications. I have not yet checked the translation enough to be able to state my opinion. In any case the first impression is good.

Comrade Frankel is sending you a copy of his confidential letter on comrade Landau's politics. What you say, dear friend, about the leaders, their education, etc. is generally correct. I too am not hostile to these ideas. That I am inclined to

attentively and amiably judge the young comrades capable of development has been demonstrated, it seems to me, by my use of a great deal of paper and ink in corresponding with these comrades. Really, one might be able to use this time to say something important to the workers at this juncture, but precisely because I consider it of the utmost importance to train individual comrades for responsible work in the workers movement, I am always ready in personal letters to solve, dispose of, or contribute to the solution of complicated and contested questions. However, I cannot place this consideration above the interests of the cause as a whole. Landau has proven to be a very unreliable fellow, and I hope that comrade Frankel's letter, based on documents and facts, will adequately prove that to you. It is no accident that Landau and Naville have formed an alliance and that this alliance is in reality directed against the ideas and methods of the Left Opposition. The similarity between Landau and Naville consists in the fact that they can go just as easily one way as another. Their own role is always more important to them than the cause itself. Political ambition is entirely justified, but on the one small condition that ambition is subordinated to the great idea. That is the case neither with Landau nor Naville. It is not precluded that this quality of theirs has driven them to the Opposition, and by no means do I want to claim that these two comrades are incapable of becoming what they are not now: revolutionaries. But first they must feel in their own bones, I mean their mental bones, that there are ideas with which one does not trifle.

I enclose my theses concerning the mistakes of the Naville-Gourget right wing on the trade-union question.²⁵¹ Of course Naville will claim, and is already doing so, that he does not agree at all with the politics of the Opposition Unitaire. But that is the most reprehensible thing about him—he only embraces revolutionary criticism in order to continue to pursue an opportunistic policy. That is how Bukharin plagiarized our critique of Purcell's policy; he adorned his resolutions with this critique and with these adorned resolutions he supported Tomsky's policy.²⁵⁵ In a word, this time I am making no compromises, and if the Naville-Landau brotherhood persists in its course, it means a complete break with them. This too will be a salutary educational experience for them, because if they are worth any-

thing, the experience of muddling along alone for a few years will cause them to find their way back to genuine revolutionary politics. It is also precisely from the standpoint of the future of these comrades that one must proceed unsparingly.

You no doubt know that Nin has been arrested. Yesterday I received a very encouraging letter from his wife. He is in prison with eight other Communists who do not belong to the Opposition. However, together with Nin they have agreed to a plan to immediately raise the slogan of forming Spanish workers councils. Nin is hopeful that this means the founding of the real communist party. The revolutionary atmosphere is the atmosphere of a political hothouse. A small group today can become a major political factor in just a few months. That is what we experienced in Russia. I was very worried that the Spanish comrades would be too cautious with regard to the slogan of soviets. In general the Left Opposition is often more radical in its criticism than in action. Fortunately my worries have not been borne out this time, and Nin has been able to weld together very good workers on a program of revolutionary action. One can look with hope to the future.

On the Eastman question: As early as 1928 I explained my "repudiation" of Eastman in a circular that was widely distributed in the Russian Opposition and sent abroad.²⁵⁶ I was certain that the document was long known to the American comrades and had been published somewhere. Only now from your letter do I learn that this is not the case. Fortunately I have a copy. I am sending one to comrade Eastman and am enclosing another with this letter.

In a footnote to my French theses I have briefly stated my position on the wild idea of a bloc with Lovestone.²⁵⁷

Enough for now, for I have much to do.



The Fight Against Landau and Naville Is Too Sharp

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky²⁵⁸

4 March 1931

These are excerpts from a letter in which Shachtman detailed the CLA's Expansion Program and publishing plans.

1. I am a little worried about the events in Germany. It seems to me that the situation is being sharpened too much. I am, to be sure, not in agreement with the policy that Landau is pursuing—in the organizational sense, at least. The results of the national conference made an especially bad impression—rather the lack of results. As to the political differences, I naturally do not know to what extent they are developed, nor have there yet been presented any political documents of the contending sides, and not having any theses, no judgment can be expressed. I am quite certain that political differences exist, since I have never yet seen an “organizational struggle” inside the movement which did not have at bottom some political dispute—unless it is a question of bandits who are fighting. But what does arouse some disquietude is the organizational acuteness that the struggle has already assumed in consideration of the fact that no clear political differences on fundamental, principled questions have yet been demonstrated, at least not to my knowledge. The proposal by Well to expel Landau from the Opposition I consider an unnecessary accentuation of the dispute. Naturally this does not for one moment justify the steps that Landau has taken and the fact that he has, in a sense, provoked the Leipzig comrades. I intend to write in the same sense to the International Secretariat and propose that the two contending forces in Germany present their respective political theses for the discussion of the international Opposition so that we may be in a position to judge objectively.

2. The situation in France seems to have reached a state of calm.

Naville has written me a few words on the situation which went into no details on matters, but informed me that he was no longer a member of the executive committee. More than that, he writes me, the new executive of the Ligue contains only representatives of "one tendency." I do not know whether this is a result of the decision of the executive (the present majority) or the withdrawal, the abstentionism, of Naville's group. Either way, I believe, there is no reason for such a situation, nor should it be concurred in. The removal of every single representative of the Naville group from the executive would be a mistake; the *withdrawal* from the executive by the Naville group would be equally wrong. Naturally, here too, I am expressing a personal opinion, since our own executive committee has not yet taken a formal position on the matter. However, until additional or more detailed information on the reasons for the condition of the French executive are at hand, information which would explain its constitution on so unilateral a basis, I believe that if a basis of political collaboration exists, the necessary steps should be taken.[...]

6. A personal question. So as to avoid any misunderstandings, do you consider that the letters you send to me are to be communicated to the National Committee formally and officially? I gained the impression from some of the letters from you (for example, the one in which you refer to your personal views on the question of Rosmer and other French comrades) that they were meant to be confidential and personal. Perhaps I am wrong in this impression. Will you be good enough to make it clear?



What Is Your Position on the German Crisis?

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁵⁹

4 April 1931

In early 1931 the fight between Landau in Berlin and a group of comrades around R. Well in the Saxon city of Leipzig reached a crisis point, with each group threatening to expel the other. Trotsky here requests the CLA's position on organizational measures proposed in his "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition."²⁶⁰

I have left your letter of March 4 unanswered for so long not because I have no time—I always find time to answer letters—but because my friend Frankel has had absolutely no time in the last weeks, because the entire work of moving rested on his shoulders, which here in Turkey is no mean feat.²⁶¹ In any case the leadership of the French Ligue sent comrade Henri Molinier to help, who really performed a great service by spending two weeks here.

Unfortunately I cannot tell from your letter whether you and your leadership have taken an unambiguous position on the purely practical, organizational side of the German crisis. The proposals pertaining to this are included at the end of my circular letter and were approved by the International Secretariat, and the members of the bureau have been invited to express their opinion about them. My proposals in particular aim at avoiding a split. The comrades in Saxony have withdrawn their demand that Landau be expelled and have accepted the proposal for an honestly prepared and honestly convened conference with the participation of international comrades. Now Landau does not accept this because he, as other comrades seem sure, would remain in the minority, and that he cannot do. So, what now? That is the question. And here it is important to take a position and not be evasive. If Landau had felt pressure from different directions a few months ago that the

international Opposition would not tolerate his subversion, he might have come over and we might have saved him for work in the future. Unfortunately the other sections have taken quite a wait-and-see, conciliatory-passive stance. Not only did Naville support Landau, he also nourished his false hopes and illusions. Thus Landau ended up in a blind alley, and I doubt very much that there is a way out for him.

I will send you the necessary Chinese materials as soon as we have gotten a bit settled in the new flat.²⁶²

I will have to devote the next five months entirely to the second volume (October Revolution) and thus will have little time in the short term for the international Opposition.²⁶³

You write about Scribner. This gentleman, as you call him, really buried my autobiography: a delay of half a year, a prohibitive price, and, as I discern from his catalogs and magazines, he is embarrassed to provide the necessary American publicity for the book. I have bad luck with American publishers. No comparison to the German publisher Fischer.



On Landau, Prometeo, and Weisbord

Letter by Max Shachtman to the
International Secretariat²⁶⁴

[Early May 1931]

On April 10 the International Secretariat wrote to the CLA requesting Shachtman's urgent intervention, as a member of the International Bureau, on the dispute with Landau. In this undated answer Shachtman reports on the decisions of the CLA resident committee at its April 27 meeting.

On the German Situation

At the last meeting of our National Committee, we considered the situation in the German Opposition, on the basis of all the documents we had on hand (letter-circular of L.D. Trotsky, letters from Landau, statements of Reichsleitung [national

executive], etc.). After a lengthy discussion, the committee unanimously adopted the following proposal submitted by me:

We endorse the practical proposals of comrade Trotsky contained in his letter entitled "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition" as a basis to approach a solution of this crisis. Further, that we reserve a formulation of our opinion on the political and principled issues involved in the controversy until such time as we have had further opportunity for study. That we further protest against the organizational measures taken by the Berlin executive committee (Reichsleitung) which are calculated not to bring closer the solution on the basis of political discussion, but artificially to anticipate the decision through what is at best premature organizational measures.

Since comrade Landau has written to me in my capacity as a member of the International Bureau, I am recording my entire agreement with the above declaration, which is identical in essence with the statement of comrade Nin. It must be added that it is as yet difficult to estimate the *political* character of the dispute between the Reichsleitung and the Saxon comrades since we have not at hand any theses from both sides. But the organizational measures and the attitude thus far taken by comrade Landau are unmistakably prejudicial to the interests of the German and International Left. It is clear that not only in the Austrian affair but also in Germany, comrade Landau has failed to measure up to his position as a member of the *International Bureau*. In the Austrian question at least, he acted more as a member or former member of one specific group than as a responsible member of the bureau. This is all the more regrettable in consideration of comrade Landau's unquestioned ability to serve the movement. Moreover, the disloyalty and distorted use comrade Landau makes of Lenin's Testament in his effort to discredit comrade Trotsky's intervention in the German dispute in itself deserves a severe repudiation by the German Opposition. It is on a level with Frey's "interpretation" of Stalin's "cleverness in factional work" as the cause for the victory of the reaction in the Soviet Communist Party.

On the Proposal of the Italian Left

Here also our NC discussed the resolution of the Prometeo Group, and adopted the following proposal made by me which will be communicated to you by our secretary, comrade Swabeck:

We reject the proposal of the Italian Left (Prometeo) Group and its conception that the International Secretariat should be a mere "liaison" center between the national sections, and we propose in its place that up until the time when the coming European conference will elect an even more authoritative executive body, we fully recognize the authority of the International Secretariat politically and organizationally.

Considering the disruption of the bureau in the past months (withdrawal of Rosmer, imprisonment of Nin, distance from America, "imprisonment" of the Russian member), the secretariat not only had to assume political functions up to a certain point, but it was in the interests of the Opposition that this be done. Without an authoritative international body, there would have been no adequate means of intervening to solve the crises that broke out in various countries and threatened to discredit or weaken the Left Opposition (Austria, Belgium, France, and now Germany). It is not without symptomatic significance that the attack upon the secretariat comes from those comrades and groups who have adopted in the past or today a false position, and against whom the secretariat generally adopted a correct position.

Weisbord Group

The group of Weisbord has finally been constituted as an "organization" and one issue of its paper issued. It is necessary that the clearest line of demarcation be drawn between the Opposition and this group of opportunist confusionism. The fact that Weisbord has arbitrarily arrogated to himself the title "adhering to the International Left Opposition" has already had a confusing effect in certain circles. This confusion must be eliminated by a sharp declaration of position by the secretariat. From his theses, which you have already received, and from other parts of his paper, it will be observed that it is not only filled with outrageous slanders and falsifications addressed to the Communist League of America, but that he has not, despite our criticism, changed his political course. The proposal for a bloc with Lovestone "for mass work and against (?!) Menshevism," forms the central tactical slogan for his movement. To prevent him from any longer compromising the name of our movement—and his idiocies are exploited against us by the Stalinist apparatus—the International Secretariat must establish

its position immediately and unambiguously. From your last letter, it appears that such a statement will be made public.

I shall try to write in more detail on other questions in the next few days.



I Sought to Avoid a Premature Split in the German Section

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky²⁶⁵

2 May 1931

This is an excerpt from a letter in which Shachtman also discusses the CLA's projected book, Problems of the Chinese Revolution, and other publishing matters.

1. I am enclosing a letter I have just sent to the International Secretariat which will adequately present not only the position of our National Committee on the crisis in the German Opposition, but also my own. I observe from your letter, as well as from a note which I have just received from comrade Frankel, that you were in doubt as to my attitude on this question, but I do not believe that there was any foundation for uncertainty. The only phase of the question that concerned me was to prevent a premature split in the German Opposition before the *political* position of both sides had been established, so that *if* a split was unavoidable it would at least take place on a principled basis and not merely on artificially hastened organizational measures. It appeared to me that both Landau and Well were pushing the organizational questions to the fore and not the political questions (naturally, this applies far more to Landau than to Well). The fact that Well withdrew the demand of the Saxon comrades for Landau's immediate expulsion was unmistakably a step in the right direction. Landau's obstinacy, however, does not speak well for him. With the practical proposals made by you pour régler la lutte [to moderate the struggle], I am and have been in thorough agreement. I repeat, the only question

on which doubt existed and for that matter still exists, is in the political dispute (we have only Landau's opinion on the tempo of the development of fascism, just as we have only Well's opinion on the trade-union problem—neither of the two groups have adopted detailed theses on both of these questions, or on other tactical and strategical problems). That Landau is driving clearly toward a split is quite evident, and every measure should be taken, in my opinion, to prevent such a split—at least until a clear political line of demarcation shall have been established. In such a case, the ranks of the German Opposition (and outside of Germany too) will have the possibility of aligning themselves on fundamental lines of policy and not upon “conjunctural” and “nebensächliche” [subsidiary] organizational disputes. The latter, it is true, always reflect political undercurrents. The whole problem is in bringing these undercurrents to the surface. It has been one of the worst features of the internal struggles of the Comintern in the past that the organizational measures have been pushed to the foreground unexpectedly in order to conceal the political differences and make it impossible for the Communist workers to judge the political merits of the disputing groups until they were confronted with an organizational *fait accompli*. You have frequently referred to this system in reference to the appearance of the Leningrad Opposition in 1925. It seems to me that Landau has been trying to repeat this system in the German Opposition: First crush the Well group organizationally and then “justify” it politically. It was only to avoid a repetition of such a state of affairs that I wrote you previously in the sense of establishing the principled nature of the dispute and not submerging it in organizational conflicts which are either secondary or else should come *after* an ideological clarification. Having this view I could naturally do nothing but express my complete accord with the measures you proposed at the end of your analysis.



You Bear Some Responsibility for Landau's Course

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁶⁶

23 May 1931

Trotsky wrote this letter shortly after Landau refused to comply with the organizational proposals of the International Secretariat, signaling his intention to split from the ILO.

1. As you suppose, I am really swamped with work and can hardly imagine how I could write the foreword to the China book that you request. It would have to be worked out very carefully. I do not have a clear idea which manuscripts on China I should send you. The larger work, "The Chinese Question After the Sixth Congress," was sent to you in January. Did you intentionally disregard the longer article from the Russian bulletin no. 15/16, "Stalin and the Chinese Revolution"? The article is perhaps somewhat dry, consisting primarily of quotations, but it represents a rather comprehensive work and can serve to a certain extent as the foreword you want, since it places the different stages in context and, in addition, brings to light new, important documents. I would recommend that you include this article as the first or the last. That, at any rate, would make the task of the foreword much easier for me. Also, I do not see on your list my most recent article, "The Strangled Revolution," on Malraux's novel, printed in *La Vérité*. In my opinion this article would fit rather well into the framework of the book.

2. Along with comrade Frankel, we are very pleased that you have partially come out of your shell regarding Landau. Your explanations—allow me to say—do not seem very convincing. You write that you wanted to avoid a premature split. Do you think then that I wanted to bring about or accelerate this split? And if not, what practical steps have you proposed to achieve this aim? For my part, I have done everything that seemed to me possible and expedient. Moreover, it seemed to me that if the

leading comrades of the national sections had energetically put pressure on Landau in time, it would perhaps—I say perhaps—have been possible to save him. Unfortunately that is no longer the case, and you bear a small part of the responsibility for that. After Landau, to be sure, the lion's share is borne by Naville, who filled Landau with false hopes, sent him equivocal information, etc. And now Landau wants nothing more to do with the International Secretariat and is assiduously in the process of forming his own international with the Prometeo people, with Gourget, with Overstraeten and, as I have been told, with...Weisbord for America. What is more, while doing everything to put off unification in Austria and to break it in Germany, he accuses me of having split all the national sections, particularly in America. So, my dear Shachtman, I bear the responsibility for your not being on good terms with Weisbord. Naville, I fear, will be forced to embark on the same path. He has been deserted by his closest friends, and not by accident. Those whom he influences are hostile to us and they really mean it. Naville, however, plays with ideas and is never serious or honest. He is staying in the Ligue in order to sabotage it from within and to help Landau set up the new international. I have laid out the principles involved here in a letter my son will send you.

It goes without saying that decisions must be reached on the basis of the principled lines of the various tendencies, and I understand very well your organization's caution in this area. But this criterion may not be understood so formalistically and pedantically. The Bordigists are one tendency and they must be judged according to their basic principles. Gourget is a tendency; Overstraeten is also a tendency—an unfortunate one, of course. But what can one say about Mahruf, which changes its "tendency" seven times in the interest of cliquist self-preservation and in so doing does not shrink from the foulest means? Judgment must be based on the fact that it is entirely an unprincipled clique, demoralized by the methods, splits, and intrigues of the Comintern, never taking ideas seriously at all, to be judged not by its theses but by what it does. It is not Landau's theses of tomorrow that are decisive but the fact that he approves of everything for China, also for America and all the other countries, as long as it does not touch his position of

power. It is not these possible theses on the trade-union question that are typical of Landau, but the fact that he maintained utter silence about the discussion of the trade-union question in France because Naville is his friend. The programs, the theses, the principles are of the utmost importance if they represent a reality. But when they represent only window-dressing and camouflage for clique warfare, one kicks them aside in order to unmask the gentlemen in question and reveal them *in natura*.

3. Of course I am pleased that you have gotten a little money from the prepublication rights. As to the rights for the German *Volkszeitung*, I had to send Fischer an airmail letter, and not a telegram, to explain the matter to him more clearly.²⁶⁷ I asked that he wire his decision to America. Unfortunately I am not sure that he will comply, and in the case of a negative response I would gladly reimburse the *Militant*.

But at present we are dealing with the prospect of stepping in with a larger sum of money. I fear that Boni will also try to deduct 5 percent from the *Saturday Evening Post* royalties.²⁶⁸ And since first of all, the publishers have robbed and deceived me enough, and secondly, because I urgently need the money, particularly to create a German theoretical journal, I am determined not to pay the 5 percent under any circumstances, even at the risk of completely breaking the contract. I have written Eastman about this in more detail. I would like the 5 percent to go to the *Militant*, from the book as well as from the prepublication reprints. It would represent a significant amount. Now you must influence our dear Eastman to deal more aggressively with Boni and not to surrender our common interests as he has surrendered his own.

4. I have no idea what comments the bourgeois press has been making and would like to see anything of interest that has appeared.

5. I do not have to tell you how pleased I am at the prospect of transforming the *Militant* into a weekly paper. The next step will have to be a monthly theoretical journal. I am very inclined to earmark my contribution to the *Militant* for this specific purpose.

Naville Plays With Ideas

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁶⁹

2 August 1931

Trotsky here takes issue with Shachtman's concern at the lack of response to Naville's criticisms of the French Ligue's actions during a miners strike in spring 1931. Under Molinier's leadership, La Vérité published an article that declared the strike unwinnable and advocated that miners return to work. Many Ligue members protested; a small group around Pierre Naville's brother, Claude, split and began publishing the Bulletin de la Gauche communiste with Rosmer's collaboration.

The last two pamphlets gratefully received. I have no objections to changing the title of the Spanish pamphlet.²⁷⁰ On the contrary, it is much better than the original one. I am very pleased that the pamphlets are selling so well.

Just briefly on Naville. You mention that his critical article on the strike has not been answered. I must confess that I have not read it. For a long time Naville ducked to avoid taking a position on the most important questions, since he was always and everywhere connected with the group that was on the wrong track. He would always lie in wait and come out with a critical article in order to exaggerate the real tactical mistakes of the other side and thus camouflage himself. One ought not exaggerate the quest for the principled line in every single case. There are elements and grouplets who do not have one and have no need for one. But they would like to ramble around the revolution, fence with ideas, and play a role. That also has a social basis: Capitalist society produces quite a lot of nuances in the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia with purely formal characteristics, lacking deeper social roots and a developed sense of responsibility. Unfortunately we are forced to observe over and over again that some have been impelled toward us not because we are a Marxist opposition but because we are an opposition per se and because they are incapable or not inclined to subordinate their hollow abilities to the discipline of a serious cause.

For example, it is impossible to judge the Landau clique, the Mahnruf, by its platform, because this clique shimmers with platforms of the most variegated hues; it is not possible to combat it on the basis of particular ideas but only on the basis of its dearth of ideas. This also seems to be the case with Naville. Together with his inner circle he treks nomadically from Communism to *Révolution surréaliste*, from *Révolution surréaliste* to the Opposition, he oscillates between the right and the left, joins us without joining us fundamentally, remains in the Ligue but with ties to Landau and Gourget, etc. He wins no one over; on the contrary, he loses even his closer friends along the way. Now Gourget is rebelling against him and wants to come back.²⁷¹

You ask me about Rosmer's political position. He hardly takes one. But he is tied to Naville and Landau and has become enmeshed in a very nasty situation. He wrote an extremely unpleasant letter to the Belgian Opposition in which he complained of Zinovievist methods, etc. When the Belgian comrades inquired, I had to answer directly, thus breaking my silence. That of course exacerbates the situation, but, really, I cannot do anything about it.

I am now giving the *Militant* only a very cursory reading, for I am completely absorbed by my book. But in the last three weeks I have been pleased to get my hands on a new issue each week. The weekly *Militant* cuts a pretty good figure.

As soon as the second volume of the *History* is finished I will tackle the problems of the international situation, and I hope to be able to send you a piece on the United States.

Get the Secretariat's Cart Out of the Mud

Letter by Jan Frankel to Max Shachtman²⁷²

14 November 1931

Trotsky's secretary wrote to Shachtman on the eve of his departure for Europe. In Kadiköy at the time, Albert Glotzer was to meet Shachtman in England to help evaluate supporters of the Left Opposition.

Thank you for your letter. Of course we await your reports with much anticipation, both on your impressions of Paris and on the results of your stay in London. Of course I will be glad to compile and send the materials you want, but I cannot do this without the help of our Russian stenographer and she is sick at present. In any case I will do it as best as I can.

We believe it is absolutely necessary that during your stay in Paris you get the secretariat's cart out of the mud, where it is stuck fast. The situation of the secretariat in Paris is compromised to the utmost degree. Instead of being an executive organ of the national sections, it has become the victim of respective comrades' inclinations and impressions, degraded into a tool of personal and circle fights, and thus has become counterposed to the most important sections. Now it is rotating around its own axis and not budging an inch. The practical work is done very badly, and what does happen, as one comrade quite rightly writes, has to be done almost exclusively *malgré et contre le secrétariat* [despite and against the secretariat].

Up to now the expansion of the secretariat has shown no great practical results. The past weighs like lead on it, and the main sickness is that the Parisian secretariat and above all comrade Mill—who is a very honest comrade sincerely dedicated to the cause, that is beyond doubt at least for all comrades who criticize him—*do not grasp their role*. The secretariat is above all a *working organ*. Nevertheless, up to now it has not been able to create its own, even very modest, working apparatus. Everything depends on the Ligue (see minutes). *C'est la ligne de la moindre résistance et le résultat en est, que l'Opposition internationale*

reste une somme de sections et de groupes isolés, au lieu d'avoir été entré dans la voie d'une organisation serrée, plus ou moins homogène et consolidée. [This is the path of least resistance, with the result that the international Opposition remains *a sum of sections and isolated groups* instead of having embarked upon the path of a tight organization more or less homogeneous and consolidated.] The political pretensions of the secretariat in no way correspond to the results of its practical work and the authority it has thereby acquired (i.e., lack of authority): They correspond just as little to the composition of its personnel (the political youth of most of its members) and, most importantly, to the nature of its tasks. After having gotten itself into a very bad situation, it proclaimed a "crisis of confidence" and, in keeping with parliamentary custom, demanded precisely from those sections against which it had fought for months an overnight "vote of confidence," despite protests and the obvious abuse by Mill and Souzo. While it accuses the national sections of a lack of practical support and LD of a lack of political support, on important questions facing the Opposition it proceeds completely unilaterally, without obtaining the opinion of the sections.

In a word: If there is any hope at all of breathing something like life into the Parisian secretariat, it is only under the condition that it replace the anticipated authority of individual members with *work* (business tempo! not the old European trot!), and that it not look to its own moods but rather to the political opinion of the majority of the sections. Otherwise, it is completely ridiculous, for example, to complain about LD's "boycott" when, on the one hand, it systematically sabotages and brushes aside his advice and protests, and, on the other, simply places before him faits accomplis (and for the most part they are fautes accomplies). That was the case in the correspondence between LD and Mill, which was anything but sparse. Thus it is quite understandable that LD must use other routes in order to let the national sections know what he has to say.

Friend Glotzer made the best impression here both personally as well as politically and won the undivided sympathy of all members of the colony. The best evidence of this is that we are holding him prisoner here, even if that is partially forced by outside circumstances.

Molinier Is Far From Correct

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky²⁷³

1 December 1931

Written from Paris, this letter of complaint about Raymond Molinier and the lack of authority of the I.S. was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 2 (July 1932) after it became a subject of dispute in the CLA.

Molinier was the French section leader who supported Trotsky on the trade-union question. Rather than fight Molinier on this question, his opponents continually raised rumors of his shady business dealings. Shachtman was well aware of this fact: In August Frankel wrote him about Rosmer's "slandorous baiting" of Molinier, reporting that Rosmer had traveled to Spain in an attempt to poison the Spanish Opposition.²⁷⁴ Trotsky advocated the establishment of a control commission to investigate the rumors, but the Ligue's October 1931 national conference failed to act because no one would file charges. Albert Treint, a Zinoviev supporter, joined the Ligue at the conference and was elected to its executive. Molinier immediately formed an alliance with him, and as a result, Molinier's former supporters in the Paris Jewish Group broke with him. Led by Felix and Mill, the I.S. secretary, they wrote to Rosmer suggesting collaboration. In a December 22 circular letter to the national sections, Trotsky noted:

The Jewish Group ought to become the Ligue's voice for propaganda among the Jewish workers. But this one of its functions is scarcely filled by the group, in which there undoubtedly are workers devoted to the cause. On the contrary, it became a support for two or three comrades who seek to give some kind of direction to the Ligue and the whole international Opposition. Up to now, nobody knows anything about this "direction," for, apart from confusion, the authors of this "direction" have till now brought nothing into the life of the Opposition. They were with Paz against us, they made their orientation in the Ligue dependent on conditions of a subjective character, they supported Molinier-Frank against Rosmer-Naville, they made a bloc with Naville and afterward with Rosmer, they created confusion and confused themselves, they derailed the Jewish Group, and brought nothing but decomposition.²⁷⁵

*In early January the Jewish Group withdrew its two representatives from the Ligue's executive committee, an act that Trotsky strongly condemned as an attempt to "transform the Ligue into a federation of national groups."*²⁷⁶

Shachtman's letter refers to the ostensible differences between the Jewish Group and others in the Ligue on relations between the PCF-led trade-union federation, the CGTU, and the main reformist trade-union federation, the CGT. In his January 15 letter to the Jewish Group Trotsky wrote: "Comrade Felix has misled the Jewish Group by greatly exaggerating the differences, by seeking artificial pretexts for the differences, by making a caricature of the differences. Because of their sterile and scholastic character, these discussions have not been able to contribute anything to the Ligue in an ideological sense."

I have just returned from a two weeks' sojourn in Spain, equally divided between Madrid and Barcelona. From the point of view of the Opposition, I find that its organizational strength and influence are not only good, but actually increasing, despite the fact that since the recent lost strikes led by the anarchists and the syndicalists, there has set in a certain depression in the ranks of the workers. Together with comrade Lacroix, I took a sort of a "census" of the state of the organization, which I later verified by reading through all the correspondence which the EC had received for the last three months or so. From the report which I shall immediately draw up for the International Secretariat, you will be able to get a more complete picture of our Spanish section and the possibilities for growth which it has before it.

The most unfortunate aspect of the situation there at the present moment is the loss of the weekly periodical, *El Soviet*. I made every attempt to convince the comrades of the urgency of recommencing its publication, but I must confess that while their willingness is as great as that of anybody else, they were nevertheless able to draw up a financial statement of income and expenditures which demonstrated that in order to issue the weekly paper once more and to have a full-time paid secretary—which is at least as important—it is necessary that they have financial aid from abroad to the extent of some 1,300 pesetas per month for the coming four, five, six months. It is true that the secretariat, upon the basis of pledges made by comrade Molinier, has assured them that this sum will be forthcoming

for the weekly and for the secretary. But the comrades—both in Madrid and in Barcelona—have gathered such a bad impression of the promises of comrade Molinier (even if half of them were based upon promises made by you) and they have developed such a sharp antagonism against him, that they insisted that they would not begin to issue the paper again if the pledges for financial aid were based upon promises made by Molinier. In such a case, it is of course very difficult to verify the impressions made upon comrades. The atmosphere in the French Ligue is so tainted today—and the French situation is now having its repercussions in Spain—that it is almost impossible to take the word of a comrade. No two comrades have the same report to deliver about any single event or any single action. The Spanish comrades recounted to me a whole series of actions taken by Molinier. The latter, in turn, presents the affair in a totally different light. Since there are practically no “documents” on the matter, it is all reduced to a question of the word, or the impression, of one comrade as against those of another. On such a basis, it is impossible to form a judgment. In any case, I am convinced that with all due credit and respect for the good intentions that animated comrade Molinier while he was at work in Spain, he conducted himself in such a manner as succeeded in antagonizing all the comrades there. In this sense, many of the arguments which you present in your recent letter to comrade Nin (a copy of which was sent me) are not entirely true.²⁷⁷ I have no doubt that, confronted with the bitterness of a retreat, the comrades may have the tendency to seek somebody upon whom to fix the blame—and they find Molinier. But their hostility toward him does not appear to me to be founded upon that alone. I need hardly add that I do not share the exaggerated emphasis that the Spanish comrades place upon the “work of Molinier,” and I am quite convinced that whatever comrade Molinier did while in Spain was done with the intention of giving whatever aid possible to the advancement of our movement there.

Now, however, whatever damage has been done, is done. The greatest need for the Spanish Opposition remains the weekly paper and a secretary who can give all his time to the mountain of work that is to be accomplished there. In this direction, all the comrades must exert their efforts. I am sure

that if the Spanish comrades can be made to feel that the deficit a weekly would involve will be covered—so that another retreat in the immediate future is avoided—they will proceed with the work speedily and successfully. The organization in Spain, with all its weaknesses, is in relatively excellent condition. At the head of it stands a group of really capable revolutionists. On all the important political questions there is a gratifying solidarity among them; the differences on various questions which existed between the executive committee and comrade Nin are now eliminated to all intents and purposes. If this solidity of the leading cadre can be preserved, the prospects for progress are almost limitless. But I do not want to continue here upon a subject which I will deal with more extensively in my report.

Now, a few words, the results of previous information which I gained from afar—reading the documents in New York—and the preliminary observations of the situation which I have made on the spot, concerning questions other than the Spanish.

The International Secretariat: Comrade Frankel has written to me: “Wir glauben, es ist unbedingt nötig, daß Du bei Deinem Pariser Aufenthalt den festgefahrenen Karren des Sekretariats wieder flott machst” [We believe it is absolutely necessary that during your stay in Paris you get the secretariat’s cart out of the mud, where it is stuck fast]. Unfortunately, this is now no longer possible. Rather, it would be better—I say this after serious reflection—to sink this “festgefahrenen Karren” [cart stuck in the mud] formally, because it now has and can have little else but a fictitious existence. Why should the present secretariat be liquidated?

1. Because it no longer has any authority in the ranks of the International Left Opposition. Regardless of any irony about the parliamentarism of its “Vertrauensvotum” [vote of confidence] request, the fact remains that for a series of reasons, the principal European sections have withdrawn their “Vertrauen” from the present secretariat, and its views and deeds have no authority with them. I do not now argue about the *why*, I merely present the *fact*. The Russian section has practically broken off its connections with the I.S. The German section’s Reichsleitung [national executive] has done practically the same. The French EC conducts a campaign against the

secretariat and dominates it in general. Through knowledge of this situation, the Spanish section is now in a conflict with the secretariat and evidently does not take much stock in its decisions, feeling that it has little if any authority in these matters. Under such conditions—regardless (for the moment) of what brought them about—the secretariat is largely a fictitious institution.

2. For its material existence, the secretariat depends almost entirely upon the French Ligue, or, to put it less vaguely, upon comrade Molinier. Between the latter and the secretary of the I.S. (Mill), there is a violent and open struggle. It is *all* the sections which *should* furnish the material support which makes a minimum of existence possible for an I.S.; unfortunately, the sections do not fulfill this obligation. What comrade Frankel correctly describes as the dependence of the I.S. on the Ligue inevitably drags it and its personnel into the inner struggles of the Ligue, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the I.S. to intervene in the French situation in the name of the international Opposition. The responsible leadership of the Ligue speaks of the secretary of the I.S. as a Menshevik, a bureaucrat, etc. (in general, terms of this sort are lightly hurled about on all sides in the Ligue), which does not make matters any better.

3. The proposal to confine the work of the I.S. to that of an Arbeitsorgan [working body] is entirely correct if it is conceived in the sense that the I.S. should conduct its current and general work much better than up to now. I realize its weaknesses very keenly, as a secretariat collectively and as individual members of the secretariat. But if the proposal is conceived in the sense of reducing the I.S. to a purely technical body, I am opposed to it. Better to eliminate it entirely than to rob it of its centralizing political character which the Bordigists have proposed. Every leadership in the labor movement starts with a certain amount of “authority” invested arbitrarily, so to speak, in it in advance. If it fails to measure up to the authority invested in it, it should be removed.

4. The proposal for a subsecretariat in Berlin, which will have charge of the USSR, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Greece, etc., is not a practical one, to my mind.

The CI never had good experiences with its "subsecretariats" outside of Moscow, and the CI possessed far greater resources for centralizing its work than we. In addition, I must avow frankly that the Berlin comrades have not demonstrated in practice in our German section such a superiority in organizing ability over the ability (and it is indeed feeble, as everybody must admit) manifested by the Paris comrades. We are not yet so great an organization that we need a division of the secretariat into two parts for the countries of Europe.

These are some of the reasons which animate me to believe that the present secretariat should be dissolved. I have reached this opinion with a certain amount of regret, because I believe that the secretariat, as it is, could be very useful for the movement, and that it has in the past been of such use. Despite the criticisms, the *just* ones and the *unjust* ones, directed at comrade Mill, I believe that he has capacities which the international Opposition could well afford to utilize in his present position as secretary. Even with my casual knowledge of the recent developments in the situation, I have no doubt that he has committed mistakes. But they are not worse than some mistakes committed by some of the comrades who are most sharply opposed to him, who have not had much better results with the organisms which they guide than he has had with the organism he directs. I find him a devoted, honest, and loyal comrade, and the Opposition would be making a mistake if it drove him out of the work he has been doing, despite its shortcomings and his own defects. Unfortunately, many steps have been taken which it will be very difficult to retrace. I admit readily that I do not as yet have any proposal to make for the substitution of the present secretariat. That requires further reflection and I have not yet made up my mind on the matter. But this much I do think: As at present constituted, and in the present circumambience in the Opposition, the present I.S. is largely a fictitious institution. We should not support or nourish fictions.

The Situation in the French Ligue: With a number of objective circumstances strongly in favor of our development here, the Ligue continues to decline. I cannot too strongly express my dissatisfaction with the situation in the Ligue. The internal struggle, the quarrels, the whole atmosphere of the internal life of the Opposition in France are so *poisoned* that the whole prob-

lem of finding a way out becomes almost hopelessly obscured. Unless there is a radical change in the situation, I believe that one can have nothing but a pessimistic outlook for the immediate future.

The personal relations between the various comrades do not improve by a single iota; on the contrary, they become worse every day. It is impossible to conduct any objective discussion. No sooner does a discussion commence than it immediately degenerates into a disgraceful personal quarrel during which the most violent epithets, the most irresponsible and light-minded accusations are hurled about the room. In the United States, we have had a vast experience in factional struggles, good and bad, principled and unprincipled, groups and cliques. But never, for the more than ten years that I can remember, has there been such an atmosphere in the American Party as there is today in the French Ligue. I do not even know of a "French" precedent for such an atmosphere. The closest analogy I can find for it are the violent factional quarrels and fights in the postrevolutionary Hungarian emigration, in the battles between Kun, Landler, Pepper, Rudas, etc., etc. If I may borrow a term from Šmeral, the Ligue is being "österreichisiert" [Austrianized].²⁷⁸ I do not, moreover, see clearly a sufficiently principled or political foundation for the internal struggles and for the alignment of forces, and certainly not for the violence with which the disputes are conducted.

Still further complicating the situation is the fact that the present leadership of the Ligue (comrades Molinier and Frank) have lost the bulk of their support in the ranks of the organization. In the already greatly reduced ranks of the Paris region, for example—and Paris is practically the only functioning unit of the Ligue in all of France—we have the impossible situation where a great majority of the membership is actively opposed to the leadership. Even the *most correct* leadership cannot exist, at least in the Left Opposition movement, when it has arrayed against it the clear majority of the membership. And it is plain to me that the present leadership is far from the most correct. What must inevitably happen under such circumstances? Either the leadership gains or regains for itself a majority (so that it can function smoothly), or else the membership gains or regains for itself a leadership. I can think of no other alternative.

I have deliberately refrained from intervening personally in the Ligue, from speaking at a single one of the meetings, or even from communicating my point of view wholly to any of the comrades. It is impossible to do this under the circumstances. I know that anything I say publicly in the Ligue at the present moment would be the subject for immediate *distortion* by one side or the other. It has reached a point here where the essence of a question is rarely discussed; the thing that serves as the axis for every dispute appears to be a word here or a word there, a sentence here or a sentence there, more frequently than not torn out of its context. Besides, I tell you frankly that there is no possibility of settling the question—that is the point it has already reached—without your direct intervention.

What "solution" do the comrades here present? At the last meeting of the EC, a resolution was presented by comrades Molinier, Treint, and Marc (supported with reservations by Frank) that declared that following a discussion which is to be opened immediately in the Ligue, a split should take place. As the authors of the resolution explain, it is their intention to split the Ligue into two parts: themselves and their adherents, and the "liquidators," i.e., the supporters of the so-called Jewish Group, which forms the majority of the Paris region. What does this step signify? In practice, it means the expulsion from the Ligue of a majority of its active effectives. Even such a radical step might be taken under discussion if there were a serious enough political basis for it, i.e., if the Jewish Group were really composed of well-defined liquidators. But this has yet to be proved; it has not been proved to my satisfaction, at least. Is it true that among some of the Jewish comrades there is a tendency to emphasize or even to exaggerate the revolutionary possibilities of centrism? I think it is true. I think also that the Jewish comrades have committed more than one blunder (for instance, their letter to Rosmer). But it is also true that even if their position on this or that question is wrong, they are the type of comrades whom a wise leadership should be able to convince. At bottom, they are a splendid type of comrade, revolutionists, devoted for a long time to the cause of the Opposition, and people who are capable of taking a position and fighting for it intelligently. It is possible that under artificial pressure, under incitement, under provocations, they may slowly

and even unconsciously be driven to a liquidationist position. The history of the post-Lenin period in the CI is replete with such cases, where excellent revolutionists were driven out of the movement and even into the camp of the enemy by constant provocations. But we in the Marxian wing should be careful that we do nothing that would start such a system in our own ranks. That is not our system. It is the system of Zinoviev, of Stalin. In France, it was the system of the Treint-Girault regime.²⁷⁹ Consciously or not (that is not the important question at the moment), Treint is transferring this system into the Ligue in the fight against the Jewish Group. It is not by chance that he is the inspirer of the "splitting declaration," that he and his old-time supporter, Marc, are the majority of the signatories to it. That is not astonishing. But why should a comrade like Molinier become a party to such a step?

If it proves to be necessary, I am not at all against a split. But, I repeat, it must be conducted upon clearly defined political divergences, so that everybody understands the reason and necessity for the split. Otherwise the present confusion will be worse confounded. And if we proceed from this point of view, I do not believe that it can be said that the divergences are clearly enough defined or deep-going enough to warrant a split in the sense envisaged by the "declaration" of Molinier-Treint-Marc. What does it mean? The kernel of the leadership (comrade Molinier) is prepared to split with the Jewish Group and to maintain a unity with comrade Treint? I do not understand the political logic, the justification for such a step. Are the differences with the Jewish Group deeper than the differences which the whole international Opposition has with Treint? I certainly do not think so. Are the complaints against the inactivity of some of the Jewish comrades sufficient ground for labeling them "liquidators" so lightly, a label applied originally and principally by comrade Treint, whose political Anschauung [point of view] would really liquidate the Opposition? (Apropos, how does it happen that comrade Treint is elected to the executive committee the same day that he gives his adhesion to the Ligue?) Is the present leadership of the Ligue so correct in its political estimations that it can afford to discard a whole group of comrades? I am not at all sure that this is so. On some points, it is even the contrary. For example: On the trade-union

question now, the comrades of the Jewish Group (resolution of Felix) are, I find, much more correct with regard to the situation created by Jouhaux's resolution at Japy than the position of Treint-Molinier, which envisages a speedy liquidation of the CGTU and a "reentrée en bloc" into the CGT, a position very much analogous and—in France—less justified than the position of the Lovestone group in the United States.²⁸⁰

My principal point in all these remarks is this: None of the groups in the Ligue has such a preponderately superior political position on the disputed questions, none of them is so free from blunders, as to justify a scission or to justify an absolute monopoly of the leadership by any single group. I appreciate the capacities and value of comrade Molinier at their real worth, without exaggerations. But I do not believe he has given a sufficient display of knowing the art of leadership. Only a short time ago, he had with him the clear majority of the Ligue membership. Now he has lost it, and lost it among those comrades who made it possible to institute a new leadership in the Ligue. That is no credit, I must say, to comrade Molinier's direction [leadership]. The same may be said about the national conference of the Ligue, which was very, very bad. The conference was a victory for the *Bordigists*, not for the Opposition. The *Bordigists* monopolized the whole political part of the conference. The conference ended with an organizational victory for the group of comrade Molinier, but the victory was gained at the same time that the conference failed to adopt a single important text: Neither the political theses nor the trade-union theses were even discussed. In this respect, is there a real difference between the French national conference and the national conference organized in 1930 by Landau? You once wrote to me that one must not always look at the progress and the platforms, but one should "auf die Finger schauen" [look at what people do]. You wrote this concerning Landau and co., and it proved to be correct. Does a conference organized in France which gives the same results as Landau's conference deserve greater credit?

I have spoken about most of these questions personally with comrades Molinier and Frank. I did not find agreement with them on the matter. On the question of Treint, it is true, comrade Frank declared himself to be rather of my opinion. As I

said above, I have not intervened in the French situation because of the terrible atmosphere which makes an objective discussion impossible at the moment. But I do have certain opinions, not on all the questions, but on some of the most important ones. The main problem, as I see it, is to constitute a leadership in France which not only has a generally correct line, but which has the confidence of the comrades, that is, which is in a position to have its decisions carried out in the work and life of the Ligue. At present, this is not so. I do not propose to turn the leadership of the Ligue over into the hands of a “direction Naville” [Naville leadership], or a “direction groupe juif” [Jewish Group leadership], or a “direction Molinier” [Molinier leadership]. I believe that the only practical solution under the circumstances is a sort of “concentration.” Not an artificial “parliamentary coalition,” but a working committee in which no group dominates the EC. From what I can gather of the sentiments of the membership (at least in the Paris region), this represents what they feel is best for the Ligue. Allow me, further, to say that this step would have been taken some time ago by the regular channels of democratic procedure if it were not for the fact that most of the comrades feel that you, comrade Trotsky, are intransigently partisan of a “direction Molinier” and the comrades do not want to engage in an open conflict with you. These are the *facts*, and I feel that no leadership in the Opposition can maintain itself successfully on such a basis.

This letter is already overlong. It is sketchy, an outline, and could undoubtedly be reformulated or strengthened in many respects. But the essential points are there. Comrade Molinier is leaving for Kadiköy, and you will of course discuss the question. I am anxious to learn the results; also your views on my remarks above. I will deal with other matters (England—thanks for the material you sent) in a letter to follow.



Who Then Should Lead the Ligue?

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁸¹

11 December 1931

This letter was marked "purely personal."

At present it is not possible for me to answer your letter at length. In any case I must say that once again you do not want to express yourself clearly, because, as I fear, your political logic cannot approve of the direction in which you are tending on the basis of your personal sympathies. If I understand you correctly, you want me to declare a struggle against the present French leadership. Who then should lead the Ligue? Please say so openly. Perhaps Mill with Felix or our friend Naville with Rosmer? I hope that you will answer this precise question with an equally precise answer. Rosmer does not exist, and Naville hardly so. Mill and Felix are negative quantities. They have completely disoriented the Jewish Group. Do you believe, by the way, that a well-oriented Jewish Group could lead the French Ligue? Felix belongs completely to the Landau category. He needs an organization only to stir up trouble. He will yet go through dozens of organizations with the same exalted mission.

I have no illusions about Molinier's negative sides and never made my thoughts a secret, but one must be really blind to help the negative elements overthrow the present French leadership. That would be completely tantamount to participating in the Hitler referendum.

Furthermore, I do not want to hide the fact that I am far from delighted by your mission in Spain, because despite the one or the other stupidity which Molinier committed or could have committed, it was your duty to bring the dear Spanish comrades to their senses a little and not be satisfied with polite excuses.

You Were Never on Our Side

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁸²

25 December 1931

The following letter was evidently a response to a report on Shachtman's work in England that we have not been able to locate. The first four paragraphs were published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 2 (July 1932).

In his December 22 circular letter to the ILO sections Trotsky stated: The American League took less part in the life of the ILO than was desirable. The explanation for this is surely the distance. At any rate, it is desirable that the central committee of the League as a whole attentively follow the internal questions of the ILO, since the excessive concentration of these questions in the hands of one comrade have up to now not yielded the desired results.

This circular also contained Trotsky's proposal to restructure the I.S. as a delegated body with representatives from the most important sections.

It is good that at least a small beginning has been made in England. Let us hope that you will have more luck than Naville, who circled round and round the English question for more than a year without accomplishing anything in the least, as is also the case, by the way, in all fields.

Unfortunately, you have answered none of my objections to your conduct in Europe. In the meantime, I had to openly take a position against you in a circular to the sections, without, in any case, naming you. I must regretfully note that you have drawn absolutely no conclusions from the bad experience beginning with the international conference of April 1930. The difficult situation in the French Ligue is to a certain extent also thanks to you because, directly or indirectly, you always supported those elements who acted as a brake or as a disintegrating force, such as the Naville group. You now transfer your support to Mill-Felix, who in no sense have proven themselves. At one time you published in the *Militant* (as did *La Vérité!*) two scandalous reports by Mill from Spain that misled the entire international Opposition.²⁸³ These reports demonstrated that Mill is incapable of finding his way correctly in the most

fundamental political questions. After a year of struggle against Rosmer and Naville he has suddenly begun to cling to them. In your letter you semiaffectionately call this stupid. For a 15-year-old boy that would still be acceptable. But for the permanent secretary of the International Secretariat one must seek sharper and more political characterizations.

Your conduct in Spain was also wrong, as is evident from your own letter. The Spanish comrades, especially Nin, have committed every mistake imaginable, wasted much time, and would now like to find a scapegoat for their own weaknesses and mistakes. Lacroix, who, as it is maintained, has very good qualities, is absolutely undisciplined in his thoughts and actions, and to support him in his outbursts is a crime.

What you say about the German Opposition sounds like an echo of your old sympathies for Landau, which the German comrades do not want to forget and rightly so. In the struggle that we waged here against the accidental, used-up, or downright demoralized elements, you, dear Shachtman, were never on our side, and those concerned (Rosmer, Naville, Landau, and now Mill) always felt that they were backed in large measure by the American League. I by no means believe that the League bears responsibility for this, but I do find it necessary to send a copy of this letter to the American leadership, so that at least in the future our European struggle will be less influenced by your personal connections, sympathies, etc.

I somewhat regret the story about the interview for the *Manchester Guardian*. The topic is hardly suitable for that paper, and financially the matter is hardly worth the trouble. Let us hope that the Liberals do not accept it after all. At any rate, thank you for your good intentions.

I also cannot approve of the idea of the Stalin book.²⁸⁴ Such a hodgepodge of different articles actually intended only for a quite schooled Marxist audience would not be appropriate for a broader audience, would mislead the publisher as well as the readers, and would impair the success of the book on the history of the Revolution. Thus I ask that you completely abandon these plans. (That of course does not apply to a possible *Militant* edition of a pamphlet on Stalin.)

On the use of the second volume of the *History* in the Yiddish press in America: Since I hope that the American

League has already received the \$1,000, I believe we could turn over half the royalties to the German and Spanish oppositions. As a "commission" the American League could keep 10 per cent in order to take the thing in hand wholly in the "American" style. If I am not mistaken, the Yiddish press paid \$200 for the first volume. I want to draw your attention to the fact that the second volume is one and a half times longer than the first, and, in my estimation, is much more accessible and interesting to a broad audience. Correspondingly, the payment should be significantly higher, at any rate not less than \$300, so that the League would get \$30, the Germans and Spanish \$135 each. These amounts could be sent directly to Madrid and Berlin by bank transfers.²⁸⁵



Shachtman's Personal and Journalistic Sympathies

Letter by Leon Trotsky to the
CLA National Committee²⁸⁶

25 December 1931

In a few days you will receive a circular from me to the national sections that speaks of our successes and failures. This letter also deals with an American comrade who gave a scandalous presentation on Russia in the Paris section. This American is Miller. It was reported to me as though he had a recommendation from an American Opposition comrade. I consider this to be out of the question and would be very pleased if you would dispel that misunderstanding.²⁸⁷

In my letter I also had to take a position against our friend Shachtman. The reasons for this will be clear to you from the enclosed copy of my letter to comrade Shachtman. My efforts to find a common language with him in the most disputed European questions were never crowned with success. It always appeared to me that comrade Shachtman was and is guided more by personal and journalistic sympathies than by

fundamental political considerations in these questions, which are somewhat more remote from America.

I understand very well that from America it is not easy for you to understand immediately the internal European struggles in the Opposition and to take a precise position on them. Nor can anyone demand this of you. However, you must understand that it is very unpleasant here when comrade Shachtman at the acutest moments takes a position that completely counteracts the struggle which the progressive elements of the Opposition have been conducting for a long time and upon the basis of which a certain selection has taken place, and, in doing so, he appears to have the backing of the American section. Naturally I would not think of depriving comrade Shachtman of the right to intervene in European affairs as he likes, according to his standpoint or his moods. But it must be clear that we are dealing with only one of the leading American comrades, not, however, with the American League as an organization.



Too Much the Journalist

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman²⁸⁸

31 December 1931

This was a response to a report Shachtman wrote from London, where, at Trotsky's suggestion, he had sought the assistance of Ivor Goldsmid Montagu, scion of a family prominent in British banking and Liberal Party circles. A dabbler in the film business with ties to the Soviet film establishment, Montagu had accompanied Sergei Eisenstein on trips to Europe and Hollywood in 1929-30. He had written sympathetically to Trotsky and performed some small commissions for him. Trotsky warned Shachtman "to observe a certain discretion" with Montagu.²⁸⁹

Shachtman reported that Montagu had joined the Communist Party and was "less and less of an Oppositionist (he never was one, to be sure!)." Shachtman also wrote that he had on his own initiative submitted Trotsky's article, "Germany, the Key to the International Situation," to the bourgeois liberal Manchester Guardian and that if it was rejected,

he planned to submit it to the Independent Labour Party's New Leader.²⁹⁰ A powerful indictment of the Kremlin leadership's paralysis in the face of Hitler's rising power in Germany, Trotsky's article was written for the *Left Opposition*, not the bourgeois press.²⁹¹ In a letter to Montagu written the same day as this letter, Trotsky described Shachtman's approach to the *Manchester Guardian* as a "political faux pas. One does not submit theses to a liberal newspaper that propagates the socialist revolution." He was even more scathing about Shachtman's approach to the *New Leader*:

*If this or that article of mine appears in the reactionary, imperialist, capitalist press because the publisher has a special interest in it vis-à-vis his readership, this poses absolutely no political danger at all, because no one can or will want to confuse me with these gentlemen. On the contrary, in such a situation I have an opportunity to exploit this "special" interest to say what I consider desirable in the given instance. But the matter takes on another character if an article dealing directly with the question of proletarian revolution appears in the left social-democratic press. Unfortunately, not many are able to weigh the standpoints independently. But the fact that the article is published in the left Menshevik press appears to be a certain fraternization, and that contradicts the general interests of communism as well as the interests of the tendency I represent.*²⁹²

Trotsky requested that Montagu inform the *Manchester Guardian* editors that he "had absolutely nothing to do with the undertaking, was informed of it *ex post facto*, and immediately protested." Asking that a similar message be communicated to the ILP, Trotsky wrote that he would understand if Montagu's Communist Party membership prevented him from doing so.

Your last letter was a very big and unpleasant surprise for me. You will understand the reasons from the enclosed copy of my letter to Ivor Montagu. I absolutely cannot understand how the idea could have gotten into your head to hand over my article to the English Mensheviks. In addition this seems to me to be a really fatal example for the new English Opposition. I am afraid that there must somehow be deep differences between our views on important political questions, differences that are manifesting themselves not in general theoretical or political form, but rather in the most important acute political questions. I will tell you my opinion quite openly: Since you, comrade Shachtman, are a talented journalist—which can become of the utmost significance for our cause—you have the tendency to see

things much too much from the journalistic or writer's standpoint at the expense of the political and revolutionary. That explains why we collide with you in all questions, and also why you—with the best feelings toward me and with the best friendly intentions—could have committed such mistakes as in England, which are incomprehensible to me. I ask that you forward the copy of my letter to Montagu to the central committee of the League, since the question has unfortunately become public and above all the American League must be informed.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am far from thinking that this has damaged our political friendship. I hope we will in fact reach an understanding. But since my attempts to achieve this through an exchange of personal letters have come to naught, I must now attempt to clarify all international questions through direct correspondence with the leadership of the League.

I cannot avoid mentioning again that in your last letter you did not devote a single word to my very precise questions with regard to France. I therefore fear that instead of telling me clearly and openly why you consider my opinions and methods in the French, German, Spanish—and therefore also in the Russian—questions to be incorrect and what practical proposals you counterpose, you will remain silent and in the event of a new intervention you will again find yourself on the other side of the internal "barricades." That is why I want to bring the copy of my letter to Montagu to the attention of the leadership.

Why Did the *Militant* Print Felix's Article?

Letter by Leon Trotsky to the
CLA National Committee²⁹³

5 January 1932

This letter is a response to "The French CGTU Congress: Issue of Trade Union Unity Confounded by Stalinists" by Paris Jewish Group leader Felix, which appeared in the Militant (19 December 1931). Felix described the recent congress of the Communist-led Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire, where the Ligue-influenced Teachers Federation submitted a resolution for unity with the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT). The article included an oblique criticism of the Molinier-Treint leadership of the French Ligue:

From the point of view of numbers and strength, the activity of the Left Opposition at the congress was very weak. The mistakes committed in the past, the errors of the Opposition Unitaire, the absence of theses on the trade-union question that should have been elaborated by our national conference, all this contributed to the fact that the position of the Opposition was not defended with the necessary vigor at the congress.

At the congress itself certain mistakes were committed in the vote on the political report. This mistake was later corrected by the Executive Commission. On the other hand, we did not seek any contact with the federation and unions that defended the same point of view as ourselves, which constituted a second grave mistake, so that our own resolution received only one vote.

Trotsky's fears that Shachtman was responsible for the Militant's publication of Felix's articles turned out not to be the case. As Arne Swabeck reported, "Comrade Shachtman had nothing whatever to do with the publishing of the article. The article came through the mail and was printed in routine form without the consciousness of the editorial board of its indirect polemical character."²⁹⁴

In no. 36 of the *Militant*, which has just arrived, I find an article from France on the CGTU congress signed by Felix. It is quite possible that the article found its way into the paper purely accidentally, without the editorial board having had an opportunity to distinguish the fine points and allusions from a great distance. I fear, however—I must say this quite openly—

that the article was published through the agency of comrade Shachtman. If I am wrong, all the better. If not, this complicates the matter to the utmost. The article is directed against the leading group of the French Ligue, not openly and clearly, but by insinuations and pinpricks. That is wholly in keeping with the author's spirit. Insofar as I have been able to observe comrade Felix—first with Paz where he played a hothead against us, then in the Ligue, where he changed positions but not his method of fighting, which is unfortunately not the best—he appears to me to represent a variant of Weisbord, above all in the complete barrenness of his criticism, its insincerity, its constant personal edge, etc.

Comrade Felix has his own views on the trade-union question in France, which contradict the official policy of the Ligue. It goes without saying that the *Militant*, like every newspaper, has the right to air the views of the minority as well. This must be done completely openly and clearly, however. Accordingly, Felix should have named completely openly, in the name of a definite minority, the tendency in the Ligue he was polemicizing against. I doubt this would have been appropriate. It would perhaps have been better to pursue this polemic in the *International Bulletin*, but then, as I have said, in completely clear, open, unambiguous form. In that case the polemic could perhaps contribute something to the education of our cadres. In this insincere—I would almost say malicious—form, the polemic only serves the purposes of international intrigue.

I will be very happy if the entire matter is purely accidental and has no connection with comrade Shachtman, for in the contrary case it would only exacerbate the great dissatisfaction that comrade Shachtman has aroused against himself among those elements of the Opposition in France, Germany, also here in Kadiköy, whom I consider the best. My concern has been deepened by the fact that comrade Shachtman has not replied to the letters and warnings from me and my closer friends, and that comrade Glotzer, who promised me that he would call comrade Shachtman to order a bit, has not devoted a single word to the matter. I had the impression that both Shachtman and Glotzer are under the influence of the small Jewish Group in Paris and that they completely overlook the perspectives of the Opposition movement in Europe.

In a word, clarification of the situation on your part is absolutely necessary.



I Do Not Agree With Shachtman

Letter by Albert Glotzer to Leon Trotsky²⁹⁵

21 January 1932

Glotzer reports on a statement he submitted to the resident committee at its January 13 meeting.

I am enclosing my letter with those of comrade Abern regarding the Malamuth matter.²⁹⁶ They are self-explanatory and there is no need of any additions from me. If it is possible for you to do anything on that it possibly deserves it. Or perhaps Lyova may be able to help.

I had intended to write you when your first letter came on the question of Shachtman. But as an afterthought I decided to wait until your lengthy statement to the national sections arrived because that would complete or supplement what you stated in your first letter. The letter came a few days ago but I have been extremely busy working—typing the manuscript of your book—and in addition your letter arrived which made comment about myself and the question of the Jewish Group of the French Ligue. I think that those comments deserve an explanation from me.

I should say at the outset that the references you made to me are not entirely justified and only create an unpleasant situation for me because in a roundabout way it appears as if I am in some measure identified with the views of comrade Shachtman. This is absolutely not so and the minutes of our National Committee will show that. I have entered the following statement into those minutes which you ought to receive soon:

In view of the letter of comrade Trotsky and in line with my report to the National Committee I wish to declare that my views coincide with those of the latter. I look upon the situation in the

French Ligue as the result of the former leadership of Rosmer-Naville. The present difficulties arise directly from the former situation and I regard as necessary a complete liquidation of the former conditions as indispensable toward creating a healthy condition in the French organization. In order to clarify my position, particularly because I have returned almost at the same time with comrade Shachtman, I want to state that my views on the international are not in accord with his.

This statement of course is not a complete one but is entered only with regard to the letters you sent. But even so, I am sure that it clarifies my position entirely. I have not been and am not at present in agreement with the views of comrade Shachtman, neither on the French questions nor on international questions. This should be clear to everyone.

I am ready to admit that when I arrived in Kadiköy I did not fully understand the situation. This however can be explained by the fact that I never had the opportunity as others did to know what the situation was. In spite of that my position taken in the past was correct. Let me recall to you for a moment what I felt when I arrived in Turkey. I reported then that in the French Ligue a discussion was taking place on the trade-union question. I also said, as far as I could tell I did not agree with the position on this question—that is the position of comrades Molinier and Frank. And I should add that even now I am still of the opinion that the comrades are wrong on this very important question. Certainly it does not agree with the position of the American League with regard to the same. But then I never considered this the axis around which the French situation revolved. I don't think so today. It in no way influences the real question of the relations between the various groups. You should recall what I told you of my attitude toward Naville and his group. That I consider more important. I am no more influenced by the Jewish Group than by the views of comrade Shachtman. On the contrary—but I did say that I thought they were more correct on the trade-union question than the other comrades.

But supposing that I thought that the Jewish Group was more correct on this question? It in no way decides the fundamental question of the leadership of the French Ligue. In my report to the National Committee I told the comrades that in my opinion a reestablishment of the former leadership or even

an inclusion of those elements would be harmful to the further development of the movement there.

I feel on the whole that my positions on the international questions coincide with yours and are essentially correct. You will find upon inquiry from the comrades in Germany that this is so. But then I am sure that you know this to be the case.

Regarding Felix's article: This was published before I returned from Europe. It was put into the paper in the same manner that the articles of Ridley were put in.²⁹⁷ Just as foreign correspondence, though it is clear that it is an error because it involves in essence more than just the trade-union question—the more important question of leadership is involved.

Now then one other point with regard to Shachtman: You state that you have had no word from me with regard to my discussions with Shachtman. That is true. I have not written to you with regard to that for the following reasons: While I was in Kadiköy I wrote a letter for you to him asking him what his opinions are regarding the French Ligue. I left before he replied but I nevertheless kept in mind the idea of discussing the question with him. When I arrived in England I did discuss these problems with Shachtman. It should be clear to you now that we did not agree either on France, Germany, or Spain. That was the only discussion that we held. I should also say that *I* could not convince him in any way—and it seems harder now that even you yourself were unable to convince him that he was wrong. But he told me that he had written to you and given you all his thoughts on the situation as he saw it. But we were very busy in England and I did not get a chance to write you of these discussions because of that and secondly because he had already written you telling you of his views. Naturally when I returned and found myself in a mire of work I did not write any more of that and thought nothing more of his views until your letter arrived which informed us of his work. That of course changed things considerably.

I feel no need of diplomatizing. My views are clear. I only reacted to your letter which came today in which you referred to me. And certainly I refuse to be put in the same category with comrade Shachtman and his views. As I said above it makes my position uncomfortable with the other comrades of the NC, although from my report my position should have been clear to

them. I have a great deal more to say but will wait for the moment hoping that you will reply to this letter and express yourself on the points I made. To make myself clear: I am opposed to anyone or anybody who wishes to foist the former leadership of the international onto the movement again or who in any way expresses opinions in favor of them. I consider that as harmful to the movement—further, that if the movement is to grow it will have to cut itself from the last remnants of Rosmer-Naville-Landau (and you can add Mill) type of leadership. I am as clear on this as I am of anything.



Shachtman Acted on His Own Authority

Letter by Arne Swabeck to Leon Trotsky²⁹⁸

22 January 1932

This letter was sent to Trotsky with the minutes of the resident committee meeting of January 13, where Shachtman's functioning in Europe was discussed. The committee passed a motion authored by Cannon, which read in part, "The said views of comrade Shachtman have been put forward by himself as an individual without consulting the National Committee and on his own personal responsibility. They do not represent the views of the National Committee and it takes no responsibility for them." Abern counterposed his own more equivocal motion. At this meeting Shachtman announced that he would not continue as editor of the Militant despite the committee's vote that he should resume this post. On a temporary basis Cannon was drafted to oversee the Militant, with Sam Gordon working as his assistant. The committee voted to investigate the possibility of Maurice Spector moving to New York to be editor.

We have received your letter of December 25 and also the copy of your letter to comrade Shachtman of the same date. Both have been discussed by our National Committee—or more correctly the New York resident section—in its recent meeting. The minutes, which are attached herewith, are being submitted also to the nonresident members, together with a copy of your letters to the League and to Shachtman as well as a copy of

Shachtman's letter addressed to you from Paris in which he expresses certain views on the situation in Spain, within the French Ligue, and within the International Secretariat. The non-resident members are also being asked to record their votes on motions proposed.

In regard to these views expressed, comrade Shachtman preferred to report to our National Committee only insofar as already contained in his letter addressed to you. We wish to state, however, that comrade Shachtman carried no authority from our National Committee except that of a leave of absence for a visit to Europe, to be at the service of the International Secretariat to assist in the organization of a Left Opposition group in England, to act as a correspondent to the *Militant*, and to interview the Italian Left fraction (Bordigists) as to their exact position.

Any views expressed by, or authorized by, our National Committee in regard to problems of the International Left Opposition, or for that matter in regard to the League, have been only those submitted to you and to the International Secretariat by the League secretary or those in harmony therewith. We fully recognize the right of any comrade to express and to submit his personal views on all such questions, but they should be regarded entirely as such.

Our resident committee feels deeply concerned about the issues raised in your letters. We recognize them as issues of a fundamental political character demanding an expression of opinion of the whole committee and as soon as we have that from all members it will be communicated to you. You will notice in the attached minutes two motions made in reply to your direct question, one submitted by comrade Abern and one submitted by comrade Cannon. The latter motion is supported by myself. Comrade Glotzer supported both motions with comrade Shachtman abstaining from voting. Personally I wish to add the assurance that the National Committee as a whole will support the motion of comrade Cannon which speaks unequivocally.

We expect to be able to return to a more complete discussion and to a more complete expression of opinion on these problems of the international movement in view of the latest material received from you. In this respect I wish to also assure you of our deep concern for the struggle carried on by the progressive elements of the Left Opposition.

In regard to your direct question as to the American Miller, who delivered a scandalous report on Russia, we can answer only on the assumption that this Miller is John Baker. You will recall that several months ago we communicated an introduction to you for this same Baker who was then in Russia and had addressed a request to us for such an introduction as he wished to visit you for the purpose of giving information of developments in the Soviet Union. Prior to his leaving America he was a member of our League. We naturally took his request in good faith. Upon his return to the United States we learned that he had not made any attempt to make this visit and had no such intentions. Moreover, as we then subsequently reported to you, his views were completely out of harmony with those of the Left Opposition. We severed relations with him. He is not a member of the American League. When leaving again recently for Europe he informed us of his knowing of comrade Markin being in Berlin and that he intended to visit him to ask whether it would be safe for him to make a visit to you without being spotted by Stalin agents.²⁹⁹ We informed him that it was, of course, his privilege to make such requests upon comrade Markin but that as far as we were concerned he could get no introductions, recommendations, or contacts, that we had already informed you of his views being entirely at variance with those of the Left Opposition. Thus any claims made by him to have the recommendation of any American comrade could not be well founded.

We have in the past sent the records of our National Committee minutes to the International Secretariat only; however, with copies of all special decisions and expressions of opinions also forwarded to you. We shall as soon as technical arrangements can possibly be made have transcripts of all the minutes of past date, including those of our Second National Conference, also forwarded to you and in the future submit regularly copies of all such minutes.

Please excuse this belated answer to the important questions which you have raised; that part is due only to our technical difficulties.

We Should Have Informed Trotsky of American Problems

Letter by Albert Glotzer to Maurice Spector³⁰⁰

3 February 1932

This letter was written on the eve of Glotzer's departure for a tour of the U.S. and Canada on the topic "What Is Europe Heading For?"

You shouldn't have given up hope so easily. My intentions—and they were good ones—were to write in detail concerning the situation in the international Opposition and particularly with regard to the more recent developments which hindered me from writing momentarily, simply because I wanted some days to reflect on them. Now, as the minutes of the National Committee will inform you, the NC decided on my tour. This will bring me around to Toronto in about three weeks, I believe the date is about the 25th.

I saw your letter regarding the secretariat and I agree with your remarks.³⁰¹ You will understand why when we discuss this question. Max, of course, you know, is not in agreement on international questions. He has always had some reservations even during the early struggles against Landau-Naville. Now again he finds himself at variance with the views of LD and most of the leading comrades of the national sections on the same or similar questions—that is, questions revolving around the leadership of the international and the French organization. The problems are, to say the least, extremely delicate and at times obscure ones. But behind a great deal of smoke screen one can easily see that fundamentally it is still a problem of the development of the genuine Opposition cadres and of our revolutionary ideology. Personally, I am of the opinion that Max's views are shadowed by his pleasant relations with Naville and now Mill. But you will read from Max's letter to I.D, and you will find that he has reasons—some good and some bad—for his position.³⁰² You understand, of course, that these remarks are personal ones and

do not at all attempt to deal completely with questions—something I will do when I see you.

However, Marty and myself, at least, are opposed in every way to use this present uncomfortable situation in order to cover up or even make pretensions regarding the American problems. Although it must be clear that these developments do not lend strength to us, because demagogues find the atmosphere warmed by LD's letters. I have a great deal to say regarding the above remarks. But we on the other hand find difficulties now, and as for myself, I feel that on a whole we have been dealt a blow—not a permanent one, to be sure—but nevertheless a serious one. I feel in this respect that we have made a horrible error in keeping from LD the situation in the North American movement. All the more so since both Max and myself have been to see him. I have a feeling that this will, sooner or later, create a scandal—and that comrade LD will certainly spare no words with us on this account. But this is what we get for pan-handling political situations and I will never agree to such a thing again. We postponed for fear of destroying the organization only to find ourselves outwitted, unintentionally, so that it in no way helps our movement. It would have been far better to have settled the questions than allow it to eat on us like a cancer.

I dislike to assume the attitude of "I told you so." But I feel a little bit embittered about it, precisely because there is nothing that we can do about it now—except to allow things to develop and act accordingly. I would suggest, therefore, that you await my coming so that we can discuss at length. In the meantime you will be asked to take a position on the minutes of the National Committee. Whatever you do on that will be of no harm or consequence. I feel now that I may have been a bit too categorical, but this was no time for horseplay on my part because I was in an entirely different position from the other comrades, having just returned with a knowledge of the international questions. But the others are falling over themselves trying to place themselves first in line—"to agree without really knowing or to await knowing."

Let me know what you desire in the way of literature—I refer to the *International Bulletin* in German, *Permanente Revolution*, and I shall try to procure these things for you. I think that it is

quite possible that I may be able to bring it all with me or mail them to you personally. Specify just what numbers, etc.

In the meantime await my coming.



You Must Remain at Your Post

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman³⁰³

10 February 1932

Although you have not answered my last letters, I feel obligated to write you again. As I see from the documents that have been sent me, you want to give up your post as editor of the *Militant*. I hope the issue will already have been resolved before these lines reach you. How could it be otherwise? Your resignation would mean a blow not only to the American League but to the international Opposition as well. The central committee recently reconfirmed its confidence in you by its vote. As for me, I certainly hope that our collaboration in struggle and our friendship will remain unshakable despite our important differences of opinion. In every respect it is absolutely necessary that you remain at your post.

II.
The Fight

Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics!

by Arne Swabeck

Published 5 March 1932

This article, originally published in the Militant, is a response to Joseph Carter's "Honor Bolshevik Leaders" (Young Spartacus, January 1932).

When young comrades, who are too much impressed with their own importance, express it in supercilious scorn for the revolutionary classics, it is time to issue a serious warning. There is only one short step from such an attitude into either the camp of the useless petty-bourgeois intelligentsia or else into the foul pollution of the most abominable revisionism. This latter is precisely what happened to one of our young comrades in an article entitled "Honor Bolshevik Leaders" and appearing over his signature in *Young Spartacus* no. 2. He stepped with both feet into that foul pollution.

It is said in that article: "Rosa, in her inaugural address, again investigated the new problems brought forth by the conditions of the war and postwar period. She reexamined the teachings of Marx and Engels on the questions of armed insurrection, guerilla warfare, force and violence, and concluded that history had once again placed on the agenda the tactic advocated by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1847-48, but later proclaimed by Engels as *outlived*." (Emphasis ours—A.S.)

In criticizing Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin once quoted two simple lines from a Russian proverb: "It sometimes happens to eagles that they descend lower than chickens, but chickens never succeed in mounting as high as eagles," and he added, "she was and remains an eagle." In its reversed form this would apply to our young comrade. The outrageous statement emphasized above looks too much like the attempt of a chicken to mount even higher than the eagle.

In ascribing these views to Engels our young comrade cites in parenthesis, evidently as his proof, the introduction to *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850* by Marx. Perhaps he was unaware of the fact that long ago evidence has been unearthed of how this

introduction, when appearing in print by the Berlin *Vorwärts*, was miserably garbled by the German social democrats of the revisionist school, notably by Bernstein. The extent of this garbling became clear when Ryazanov discovered the original Engels manuscript, of which he has since produced photostats, showing the important deletions which had been made. Some of the results of his findings Ryazanov published in *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus* (vol. 1, no. 1, German edition). In English these findings were reproduced by Trachtenberg in the *Workers Monthly* for November 1925.³⁰⁴

What Engels himself thought of the printing of the introduction and of the garbled version becomes quite clear in his letters to Kautsky (then still fighting revisionism). First in his letter of 25 March 1895, he says: "My text has suffered somewhat because of the scruples of our Berlin friends, due to timidity over the Anti-Socialist Law which, under the circumstances, I had to consider."

Again in his letter to Kautsky dated 1 April 1895, Engels said: "To my astonishment I saw today printed in the *Vorwärts*, without previous knowledge, an extract from my introduction so dressed up that I appear as a peaceful worshiper of legality *quand même* (in spite of all). The more pleased I am that now the whole appears in the *Neue Zeit*, so that this shameful impression is obliterated. I shall tell Liebknecht very definitely what I think of this, and also those, whoever they may be, that gave him the opportunity to distort my meaning."³⁰⁵

Engels spoke in a similar vein, of the "mean joke" played on him, in his letter to Paul Lafargue, dated 5 April 1895.

It is perfectly true that Engels, in this introduction, draws a sharp distinction between the conditions of 1848 and those of 1895. This is as it should be. And it is particularly in this respect that the deleted parts assume their enormous significance. We shall quote only one.

In drawing the sharp distinctions of difference in the two periods Engels says:

Does this mean that the street battles will play no part in the future? Not at all. It simply means that conditions have become far more unfavorable for the civilian fighters since 1848, and far more favorable for the military forces. Street battles in the future may be successful only if this unfavorable situation can be neutralized by other factors. Such fights will therefore be far less usual in the earlier stages of a great revolution, than in its further course, and will have

to be fought with greater resources of strength. Such battles will rather resort—as in the great French revolution, and as on 4 September and 31 October 1870, in Paris—to open attack than to the defensive tactics of the barricades.

Is there in this powerful testimony any evidence of Engels having proclaimed the tactics of the *Communist Manifesto* as outlived? None whatever. On the contrary, the letters quoted contain the wrath of the revolutionary teacher against the monstrous falsifiers.

Such accusations made against Engels become a blot upon the Communist movement which we must eradicate. With our modest means we must hold aloft the banner of Marxism and particularly so in the Left Opposition. We can well afford to be humble students endeavoring to learn from our great teachers. We must guard against this supercilious, know-it-all attitude which steps with both feet into the foul pollution of social reformism. Comrades guilty of such an attitude must be called to order sharply.



Statement on “Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics!”

by Max Shachtman

12 March 1932

This statement was submitted to the resident committee on March 15, circulated to the National Committee, and published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 3 (July 1932). Shachtman demanded that the resident committee “repudiate the article of comrade Swabeck and the procedure used in publishing it.” With Glotzer in attendance this motion passed, but it was subject to review by the nonresident members of the National Committee.

On March 7 the National Youth Committee had submitted a statement to the resident committee protesting Swabeck’s “abusive, slanderous, and uncomradely language.” At that meeting the resident committee deadlocked on a motion to uphold Swabeck, with Cannon and Swabeck voting for and Abern and Shachtman against (Glotzer, the fifth committee

member, was on tour). Carter submitted yet another statement, appended to the minutes, labeling Swabeck's article "a shining example of an illogical, stupid, and puerile and dishonest piece of writing." Defending his original theses on Engels' 1895 introduction to *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850*, Carter referred favorably to the Socialist Labor Party's "Who Are the Falsifiers?," which challenged the importance of Ryazanov's revelations about the cuts in Engels' 1895 manuscript. Shachtman expands on Carter's arguments here.

In their reply to Shachtman's document, Cannon and Swabeck wrote: Did the revisionists blue-pencil the original document, striking out these and other vital, direct statements, or did Engels strike them out himself? Shachtman makes a great point of this, and so does Carter. The SLP "proves" that Engels made the excisions: "from which," says the SLP, "it is evident that if anything appears in a discovered manuscript that did not appear in the Neue Zeit, it was at one time or another expunged by Engels himself." Comrades Shachtman and Carter press this deduction very insistently, as though they are scoring a point thereby against comrade Swabeck, and without stopping for a moment to consider who has an interest in this contention.

We do not have sufficient facts at hand to give a positive answer, and we do not consider it decisive for a revolutionist. The SLP's "proof" is full of loopholes and is convincing only to those who want to be convinced. In either case the original manuscript gives the same indisputable proof of Engels' real thought and intent, and confounds the legalists who misused his authority. If Engels agreed to the deletions under the pressure of the exceptional conditions of the moment—the situation created by the drafting of the new Anti-Socialist Law—and the insistence of the party leaders—it only means to a revolutionist that Engels was betrayed and that his death soon after prevented his punishment of the betrayers.⁵⁰⁶

I want to register a formal protest against the article "Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics!" which appeared in the *Militant* of 5 March 1932 over the signature of comrade Arne Swabeck, printed without authorization or even the promised preliminary consideration of the National or editorial committee. I will not and cannot take the slightest responsibility for a document whose contents, purpose, and all the proceedings surrounding its appearance, are without precedent in our movement, outrageous, and false through and through. It is annoying to have to waste valuable time that could be profitably employed in more important matters, on an elucidation of questions that should be elementary, particularly for leading comrades, but the attempt to put the

whole National Committee on record in favor of Swabeck's article renders this statement only all the more unavoidable.

1. How did this unusual article come to be written, with its "supercilious scorn," its "useless petty-bourgeois intelligentsia," and its "foul pollution of the most abominable revisionism"? What was the occasion for the adoption of such language against a young comrade, a brutal and rude language, it should be said plainly, that cannot be found in the dictionary of comradely discussion or disputes in our ranks, but is borrowed from Stalin's vocabulary in inner-party disputes? More than two months ago, an anniversary article appeared in the January *Young Spartacus* devoted to Lenin, Liebknecht, and Luxemburg, written by Carter. In the course of a discussion I initiated in the National Committee on an article written in the *Militant* on Lassalle by a nonmember of the League, where I protested against the boudoir method of writing about the great socialist leaders (a protest in which all concurred), Swabeck raised the question of Carter's article.³⁰⁷ Nobody spoke on it. No decision was adopted on it. Swabeck announced that he would reply to it. That was all. In no sense was Swabeck "commissioned" to reply to Carter, nor was there any understanding or decision that a reply was required.

Six weeks later, with the whole incident practically forgotten, Swabeck drafted his article against Carter and handed it to the linotype operator for the *Militant*. As Carter later explained, he saw it and requested that the article be taken up by the National Committee first, with himself present to defend his standpoint. A most correct procedure and most elementary. Swabeck agreed. He showed me the article on Tuesday, March 1, and informed me that in view of Carter's request it would be taken up at the regular NC meeting the next night (Wednesday). I said nothing about the contents of the article, reserving my opinion for the meeting. Abern later revealed that when the article was likewise shown to him, he expressed disagreement with it, at least in part, and was also prepared to discuss it at the meeting of the committee. The meeting was never held because of the illness of comrade Cannon, which would, it appears, cause the matter to be held up until the next committee meeting.

The fact that Swabeck agreed to take the article up at an NC meeting and had informed at least half of its members to that effect would indicate that nobody else was in a position to sanction

the article. Nevertheless, when the *Militant* came off the press on Thursday, the 5th, the article was there. By what right? Swabeck now explains that Cannon had agreed, while in the office Thursday, to the article, and that it therefore was published without the "formality" of the committee meeting. Why all this haste with an article already delayed six weeks or more? And since when does Cannon's consent obviate the need of getting the consent of the other members of the National Committee?

The whole procedure stands in a worse light when one considers that this violent and abusive article is directed against a responsible member of the National Youth Committee and a member of the editorial board of *Young Spartacus*. He and the committee he belongs to, therefore, have, so to speak, some rights in the matter. What should have been the procedure, that is, the procedure that has always been followed in the movement in its best days? Swabeck, assuming that Carter's article deserved the strictures to which he submitted it, should first have taken the matter up with the National Committee so that the committee's views collectively, and not Swabeck's personal views, might be expressed. Especially is this necessary because on our NC is our representative to the National Youth Committee, Abern, who is also therefore concerned in the matter. Through Abern then, or through Swabeck if Abern was not qualified, the matter should have been taken up with the body directly responsible for what appears in *Young Spartacus*, the National Youth Committee and its editorial board. There effort should have been made to argue the matter out with the young comrades, and if possible to have them put out a correction in the forthcoming number of the youth paper or a repudiation of Carter, if necessary. Is this not elementary, indispensable procedure in a case like this, a procedure always followed in a democratic party when an analogous case is involved, let us say, a polcom and a subsidiary language paper's "deviation"?

Swabeck, however, completely ignored the representative to the youth committee, Abern; completely ignored the writer of the article in question, Carter; completely ignored the editorial board and the National Youth Committee; and on top of that, completely ignored the National Committee of the League itself. What we have here, in a word, is a bureaucratic procedure from beginning to end, not a loyal, comradely, democratic procedure, but one characteristic of bureaucratism.

Why? There is only one explanation. Carter has in the past been highly critical of the National Committee and of some of its members: Cannon, Swabeck, and myself, for instance, most particularly against the first two. His criticism, frequently exaggerated and petty (he is a young comrade, without a decade of experience in the movement), has been rejected by all of us from time to time, particularly when it was obviously unfounded. Comrades Cannon and Swabeck, however, have felt themselves assailed specifically and personally by Carter and have conducted a particularly sharp, and not always correct or justified, campaign against him and against other young comrades. It should be added that they have not always done it with the best results, i.e., of training and bringing up the youth to the revolutionary, important position they must occupy in our movement. More often than not they have antagonized the youth. Instead of helping to remove some of the irritating and bad aspects of the youth's work and conduct, they have only made matters worse. In recent months especially, they have sought to "put them in their place" by hammer blows instead of by patient enlightenment of those elements who are (and especially who can become) our most valuable asset in the future—in other words, by a responsible attitude which takes into consideration the immaturity, weakness, and possibilities of the youth in our movement. We do not want to flatter (and thereby destroy) the youth; neither should we flatten them out with bludgeons.

It is with this attitude that Swabeck, with Cannon's agreement, wrote and published his article. In the NC Swabeck sought to excuse the article on the ground that Carter represented a "dangerous tendency" and was a "polished intriguer" generally. The motivation is remarkable. Is it to mean that since Carter is a scoundrel anyway, in general, so to speak, any method to crush him is permissible? I don't believe in such methods. Is it not significant that only a couple of weeks or so after the NC added to the National Youth Committee two more comrades supporting its views as against the views of other National Youth Committee members, the whole National Youth Committee, the two new youth appointees included, voted unanimously against the tone of Swabeck's article and the procedure he followed in printing it? It is clear (and should have been all the time) that such only succeeded in unnecessarily creating hostilities between the young comrades and the National Committee or sections of it.

But, it has been speciously argued, it is against Carter's "revisionism" that you should direct your criticism and not against the "secondary" and unimportant technical question (?) of procedure. And further, it is against Carter's violent statement to the National Youth Committee that you should protest and not against Swabek's. Neither argument holds water. About Carter's alleged revisionism we will speak further on. As to the question of procedure, it is not a mere "digression" from "regular routine" required by an "acute situation." No, it is a fundamentally bureaucratic procedure, just as important as the theoretical dispute itself. On the second point there is no analogy. Carter made a statement *for the minutes* inside the organization, on his own responsibility, without attributing it to others, and only under the acute provocations of Swabek's article. The latter, on the contrary, had no provocation, or, if you will, such a provocation as should have been settled in the manner indicated above by me; furthermore, Swabek jumped with "both feet" into the public press to attack a responsible director of one of our brother papers. I do not, of course, feel at all called upon, nor do I accept responsibility for Carter's statement. But the issue cannot be befogged by an attempted comparison of the two documents.

2. Now as to the contents of the two articles themselves, Carter's and Swabek's.

Here too I do not feel called upon to take responsibility for the manner in which Carter formulated the point he makes. As a more experienced journalist I would not have formulated the paragraph so awkwardly. That is one thing. The essence of the matter is another. And it is on the question of the essence of the matter that comrade Swabek shows in his article that he has not understood the first thing about this historical dispute, the question around which Marxists and revisionists have argued now for more than three decades. He has not, as he acknowledged at the NC meeting, even read Rosa's brilliant speech at the foundation congress of the Spartakusbund in 1918, which did not apparently prevent him from undertaking a furious polemic on the subject of this speech. Further, I want to repeat here what I said at the meeting, that Cannon, who authorized the publication of the article, was in no position to give a categorically conclusive judgment on the article, because, at least at the moment he sanctioned Swabek's article, I am certain that he had read neither Rosa's

speech, nor Engels' introduction, nor the polemics on the subject in the prewar and postwar socialist movement. If I had the time and space here, I could demonstrate that Swabeck actually poses the question from opportunist (that is, Bernstein's) premises, regardless of the ridiculously "rrrevolutionary" conclusions he draws. However, a few points will suffice to indicate that he has not grasped the essence of the question. What did Carter say, awkwardly, if you will, but in essence? He said that Engels, in his foreword to *The Class Struggles in France* by Marx, had proclaimed the tactics advocated by both these scientific socialists in the middle of the last century as "outlived." Swabeck calls anybody who makes such a statement an individual who steps "with both feet" into "the foul pollution of the most abominable revisionism." But if Swabeck is right, then not only should Carter be characterized so elegantly, but Rosa Luxemburg as well! For what Carter did was merely paraphrase in a very condensed form what Rosa herself had said, but which Swabeck did not find it necessary to read before writing.

Rosa said:

And here Engels appends a detailed criticism of the illusion that under modern capitalist conditions the proletariat can possibly achieve anything on the streets through revolution. I believe, however, seeing that we are today in the midst of the revolution, of a street revolution with all that this entails, that it is time to break away from the conception that has officially guided the German Social Democracy down to our own day, of the conception which shares responsibility for what happened on August 4, 1914.

—"Report of the Foundation Congress of the KPD, Spartakusbund"³⁰⁸

Further:

Here, party comrades, Engels demonstrates, with the expertness which he had in the domain of military science too, that it is a pure illusion to believe that the working people, with the existing development of militarism, industry, and large towns, could make street revolutions and triumph in them.

—ibid.

Thus, Rosa also declared that Engels had proclaimed the old tactics "outlived" and thereby was "only short step" from "either the camp of the useless petty-bourgeois intelligentsia or else into the foul pollution of the most abominable revisionism." And not only Rosa! All the really authentic, authoritative Marxists, before the war, including Zinoviev, Lenin, Kautsky, and Trotsky, had the same opinion, made the same declarations, and were not only

entirely correct, but did not, for that, cease to be Marxists! This for the simple reason that they approached this particular problem of Marxism *as* Marxists, that is, as dialecticians.

But, Swabeck will argue, what about Ryazanov's revelations? Rosa, Lenin, Trotsky, and the others were not aware of the "full text" of Engels' foreword found seven or eight years ago by Ryazanov. He even writes:

Perhaps he (that is, Carter) was unaware of the fact that long ago evidence has been unearthed of how this introduction, when appearing in print by the Berlin *Vorwärts*, was miserably garbled by the German social democrats of the revisionist school, notably by Bernstein. The extent of this garbling became clear when Ryazanov discovered the original Engels manuscript.

—*Militant*, 5 March 1932

In the first place, if Carter was "unaware" of all this, then a responsible leading comrade who should be a teacher of the young comrades ought to have made him "aware" before cracking upon his skull in public and amid a shower of abuse. In the second place, Ryazanov's revelations have nothing to do with the essence of the matter. All of Swabeck's incoherent, disconnected quotations and undifferentiated references to "garbling" only serve to confuse the matter completely.

What is the actual status of Engels' foreword? At the moment the Berlin party fathers were quaking with fear at the Junkers' attempt to adopt more stringent provisions against the socialist propaganda (1894-95), Engels wrote a foreword to a series of old articles by Marx which were printed under the title *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850*. So as not to infuriate the Junkers and drive them into sharp measures, the party fathers in Berlin, including Liebknecht the elder and Bernstein, first printed Engels' foreword in the party paper, *Vorwärts*, but in such a distorted, chopped-up, bowdlerized form that the Marxian-revolutionary essence of the document was violated and, to use Engels' comment upon it later, "So dressed up that I appear as a peaceful worshiper of legality at all costs." I have never seen the *Vorwärts* extract from Engels' introduction, any more than Carter or Swabeck has seen it. We can all get an idea of its distortion, however, by Engels' indignant observations and from the subsequent revisionist use which Bernstein sought to make of it. But it is not this printing of it upon which Rosa (whom, it should be remembered, Carter

simply paraphrases), or Lenin, or Trotsky based their views. Not at all! Because the whole introduction, ungarbled, uncut, undistorted, was printed by Kautsky. He had requested it of Engels and Engels replied:

Your telegram answered at once: "With pleasure." Under separate cover follow the proofs of the text with the title: Introduction to the Reissue of Marx's *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850* by F.E....My text has suffered somewhat because of the scruples of our Berlin friends, due to timidity over the Anti-Socialist Law which, under the circumstances, I had to consider.

—25 March 1895

A week later he wrote Kautsky (1 April 1895):

To my astonishment I saw today printed in the *Vorwärts*, without previous knowledge, an extract from my introduction so dressed up that I appear as a peaceful worshiper *quand même* (at all costs). The more pleased am I that now *the whole appears in the Neue Zeit*, so that this shameful impression is obliterated. I shall tell Liebknecht what I think of this, and also those, whoever they may be, that gave him the opportunity to distort my meaning.

All Marxian commentaries on this document, therefore, have been based, not upon the *Vorwärts* distortion, but upon the "whole" which Kautsky printed with Engels' authorization and proof corrections. And Ryazanov's document? The deleted sections are obviously those which Engels himself had blue-penciled. Neither Ryazanov nor Trachtenberg dares to say the contrary openly, because Engels' letter to Kautsky is quite well-known. What then are the deletions, one of which Swabek quotes: They are purely and simply a *corroboration* and *confirmation* of the other sections, obviously deleted for one of two reasons by Engels himself: 1. In consideration of the timidity of "our Berlin friends"; 2. Because the same things essentially are said, either directly, less ambiguously, or inferentially, in those parts of the foreword not deleted but printed by Kautsky.

In a word, Engels in his foreword (the one Kautsky printed, which the SLP faithfully translated into English and very faithfully *misinterprets* in a revisionist sense) *did* advocate a change of tactics and nevertheless *did* remain a revolutionist. The foreword was not a "deathbed repentance for youthful revolutionary sins"—*but this fact was known to Marxists before Ryazanov's discovery and known to them on the basis of a dialectical understanding and interpretation of the Neue Zeit publication.*

Swabeck valiantly contends: "Is there in this powerful testimony any evidence of Engels having proclaimed the tactics of the *Communist Manifesto* as outlived? None whatever." Is it possible that comrade Swabeck has not even read the foreword, where the change is advocated in just so many words, so clearly as not to be upset by one hair by the deleted paragraphs? Only two days after his last letter to Kautsky, Engels wrote to Lafargue a letter to which Swabeck *refers* but *does not* quote, evidently because it would upset all his contentions:

(Engels refers to Bernstein) has just played me a fine trick. He took from my introduction to Marx's articles on France 1848-50 all that could be of use to him to support the tactic of peacefulness and antiviolence at all costs which he likes to preach for some time now especially at this moment when the coercive laws are being prepared in Berlin. *But I preach this tactic only for the Germany of today* and even then with substantial reservations. For France, Belgium, Italy, Austria, this tactic as a whole could not be followed, and for Germany, it might become inapplicable tomorrow.

Further, in that part of the introduction (first 18 pages) which Ryazanov declares were not in any way changed, Engels writes categorically and simply enough for all to understand:

But history also proved us in the wrong and revealed our opinion of that day (that is, after 1850) as an illusion. History went even further: not only did it destroy our former error, but also it transformed completely the conditions under which the proletariat will have to battle. The fighting methods of 1848 are today obsolete in every respect, and that is a point which right here deserves closer investigation.

—English edition

And: "The rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which up to 1848 gave the final decision, has become antiquated" (*ibid.*). Did this mean that Engels became a revisionist à la Bernstein? Not at all. Like the master of dialectics he was and unlike the petty-bourgeois revolutionists of the anarchist school, he knew that the social democrats (i.e., communists) do not advocate armed uprisings, barricade fighting, guerrilla warfare, etc., etc., every day in the week, every week in the year, and every year in the century—regardless of time, place, conditions, relationship of forces, and other concrete factors. Did he renounce revolution? That is what Bernstein tried to read into his foreword, true enough, but he nevertheless stated that the social democrats "have not abandoned the fight for revolution. The right

to revolution is, in the last analysis, the only real ‘historic right’ upon which all modern states rest without exception” and “Do not forget that the German Reich...is the product of a covenant; first of a covenant among the rulers themselves, and second, of a covenant of the ruler with the people. If one party breaks the agreement, the whole of it falls, the other party being no longer bound by it.”

But the indisputable fact remains that he did advocate a *radical change* in the tactics of the working-class party because the *situation has changed*. In what respect and why? Lenin and the other Marxists understood the change and the need for it, acknowledged it (unlike Swabeck), explained it (unlike Swabeck, who seeks to browbeat instead of enlighten), and showed why, with a *new revision*—yes, a revision—of Engels.

The situation is no longer the same as in the time of 1871 to 1914, when Marx and Engels quite consciously compromised with the incorrect, opportunist expression of “social democracy.” For *at that time*, after the defeat of the Paris Commune, history put upon the order of the day the slow organization and enlightenment work. *There was no other work*. The anarchists were (and remain) not only theoretically but also economically and politically entirely incorrect. The anarchists falsely judged the situation, they did not understand the world situation: the worker corrupted by imperialist profits in England, the crushed Paris Commune, the simultaneously (1871) victorious bourgeois-national movement in Germany, the Russia of semiserfdom sleeping its sleep of centuries. Marx and Engels correctly judged the situation; they recognized the tasks of the *slow* maturing of the social revolution.

— Lenin, “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution,” 10 April 1917

And about two weeks later:

As for the renaming of the party: the word “social democrat” is not correct, is scientifically false. Marx and Engels explained that repeatedly. If they “tolerated” this word then only because after 1871 there was a special situation: a *slow* preparation of the masses of the people was required, *a revolution did not stand on the order of the day*.

— Lenin, “The Political Situation and the Attitude of the Provisional Government,” 27 April 1917

This is the dialectical method by which Marxists approach the question of tactics, and not by superstition. One would gather from Swabeck’s argumentation that without the deleted passages revealed by Ryazanov, Engels would appear to be a revisionist and

justify Bernstein on the one hand and the SLP blockheads on the other. That is what I mean by saying that Swabeck approaches the question with revisionist premises! But even without the benefit of Ryazanov's discovery, Engels was just as much the proletarian revolutionist on the eve of his death as he was in 1848. As I said, not only did he revise the tactics of the communists, and call the old ones "antiquated, outlived, obsolete," but he was correct in doing it, as Lenin showed. And more than that, Lenin and Trotsky were just as correct in saying later that the Engels of 1895 had "now" (after 1905, let us say) also become "outlived" and had to be submitted to "revision." But for that they did not become revisionists or Bernsteinians. Let us hear again from Lenin:

Kautsky behaves differently. Little as is the factional material he has on hand on the uprising (of 1905), he nevertheless endeavors to grasp the military side of the question... "Both of them," says Kautsky on the difference between the Paris June battle and the Moscow December battle, "were barricade fights, but one was a catastrophe, the termination of the old barricade tactic, the other the inauguration of a new barricade tactic. And to that extent *we have to revise* the conception which Friedrich Engels set down in his foreword to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, the conception that the time of barricade struggles is finally passed. Only the time of the old barricade tactic is passed. This was demonstrated by the battle of Moscow..." Thus Kautsky. He reads no mass for the dead to the uprising on the basis of the failure of the first attempt.

— Lenin, "The Russian Revolution and the Task of the Proletariat,"
20 March 1906

And again:

The third lesson that Moscow has given us relates to the tactic and the organization of the forces for the uprising. War tactics depend upon the level of war technique—this wisdom was predigested by Engels and put into the mouth of the Marxists. War technique is today different from what it was in the middle of the 19th century. It would be stupid to lead a mass into the field against the artillery and to defend the barricades with revolvers. Kautsky was right when he wrote that after Moscow the time has come to revise Engels' theses, that Moscow has shown a "new barricade tactic." This tactic was the tactic of partisan war.

— Lenin, "The Lessons of the Moscow Uprising," 29 August 1906

All these writings published, it should be borne in mind, on the basis not of *Vorwärts'* distortions of Engels' foreword, but of Kautsky's exposure of these distortions, i.e., on the basis of the "whole" document. Ten years before Ryazanov, Lenin wrote:

When Engels' famous foreword to *The Class Struggles in France* appeared, the attempt was made (among other places in the *Vorwärts*) to interpret it in the sense of opportunism. But Engels was indignant about it and protested against having it seem that he is a "pacifist worshiper of legality at all costs."

—Lenin, "The Dead Chauvinism and the Living Socialism," 12 December 1914

Let us pass from Lenin to Zinoviev, writing directly under Lenin's guidance:

In the lengthy "peaceful" epoch of western European socialism which had its end on the eve of the present war, the factor of revolutionary force (Gewalt: force or violence, MS) stepped completely into the background behind the purely parliamentary legal methods of struggle. The opportunists rejected violence as a factor in the emancipation of the oppressed class. "Force always played a reactionary part in history"—this is the erroneous thesis of the opportunists and social pacifists. The well-known foreword by Engels to *The Class Struggles in France* was interpreted in the sense that Marx, a cofighter, had become, toward the end of his life, also a supporter in principle of the legal struggle. Engels himself protested repeatedly against such a construction. In the foreword itself Engels wrote: "*The right of revolution* is the only genuinely historical right." But after Engels' death the opportunists, spurred by Bernstein, began with particular zeal to develop this "interpretation." The lessons of the revolution remain a book with seven seals for the opportunists. When Kautsky, after the Moscow armed uprising (he was still a Marxist then), declared that Engels' conceptions on the question of the possibility of a barricade fight in the streets must now be revised, nobody in the German social democracy paid any attention to this declaration.

—Zinoviev, "Adler's Shot and the Crisis in Socialism," October 1916

More than ten years after it was written, Trotsky even polemicalized against sections of Engels' foreword and showed (in essential harmony with what Lenin stated above) how Engels' standpoint was no longer applicable:

In his well-known introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, Engels created room for great misunderstandings, by counterposing the military-technical difficulties of the uprising (speedy shifting of the troops with the aid of railroads, destructive effect of modern arms and ammunition, wide, long, and straight streets in the modern cities), to the new chances of victory resulting from the evolution of the class composition of the army. On the one side, Engels shows himself to be pretty one-sided in the appraisal of the role which is due to modern techniques in revolutionary uprisings; on the other side, he did not consider it necessary to present the facts that the

evolution in the class composition of the army can be brought out only when people and army are "confronted"....The Russian revolution has brought more proof of the fact that it is not arms, cannon, and armored ships which prevail over people, but, in the final analysis, people who prevail over arms, cannon, and armored ships.

—Trotsky, "The Balance of the Revolution," 1905

And finally, to get back to Rosa, let us quote from her polemic, written also long before she had the benefit of Ryazanov's purely corroboratory passages, against Bernstein's revisionist book of 1898:

When Engels revised the tactic of the modern labor movement in his foreword to *The Class Struggles in France* and counterposed the legal struggle to the barricades, he was dealing, *as is clear from every line of the foreword*, not with the question of the final conquest of political power, but with the question of the present daily struggles, not the attitude of the proletariat *toward* the capitalist state at the moment of the seizure of state power, but its attitude within the *framework* of the capitalist state. In a word, Engels presents the line of conduct to the dominated but not to the triumphant proletariat.

—Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution"

These quotations could be multiplied almost indefinitely, but I think enough have been cited to show that from every standpoint—of theory, of organization, of comradeship, of responsibility in general and the specific responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of a League secretary—the whole conduct and standpoint of comrade Swabeck are not to be endorsed for an instant. Not a single argument can be presented to uphold them and none has been presented. The procedure is unprecedented and unwarranted, the tone of the article is disgraceful, rude, and uncomradely, the contents of the article are ridiculous both from the historical and theoretical points of view.

But now a word must be added in conclusion: Since it is manifestly impossible to defend either the procedure or the content, and no serious attempt was made to do so after I had spoken at the National Committee, another tack is being taken which leads very conveniently away from the mess into which Swabeck sped "with both feet," that is, from the article at issue. The sole answer made to my exposition of the disputed points was:

1. From Swabeck, that Trotsky was correct in saying that I judge from a "journalistic standpoint."

2. From Cannon, the charge that I have organized a faction against the National Committee on the “worst possible basis,” the youth.
3. From Cannon, a continuation of the underhanded insinuations of “another Naville” or “another Landau.”

The first answer is a ridiculous attempt, part of a petty campaign, by the way, to cover up an embarrassed position by dragging over it a quotation from one of comrade Trotsky's letters to me, and has about as much to do with the actual question under consideration as, let us say, Swabeck's article has to do with real Marxism. The second “answer” is a patent falsehood which nobody can prove for the simple reason that no proofs exist. It too is invented to cover up a bad mess and as an “ideological preparation” for a factional campaign which Cannon announced at the same meeting for the “purging” of the organization regardless of the wreckage he strews about along the road of this campaign. The third statement I called a frame-up and I repeat it here. Cannon has disloyally taken advantage of views I have expressed in letters to comrade Trotsky on certain international questions and which aroused a difference of opinion between us on some points, to continue a campaign against me started long ago, to which he, so to speak, tacked on the “international questions,” which reached its height at the last conference with the insinuation-filled speech to the effect that I was, after all, only a petty-bourgeois intellectual, a writer, an American Naville, an American Landau.³⁰⁹ Now the song becomes a little louder and even less attractive. It is very clear what Cannon is aiming at: I know it but too well. To talk constantly about “collaboration” and to do everything to render it as difficult as possible, if not impossible; to solve every question that is raised with the broad hint that Shachtman is only another Naville or Landau (both in one)—these methods won't work, except to the unmistakable disservice and enfeeblement of the organization. It is a course which is a warning against itself.



A Bad Situation in the American League

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky³¹⁰

13 March 1932

On 23 January 1932 Shachtman finally responded to Trotsky: "I feel absolutely speechless at the sharp tone of your last letters." While defending the views in his December 1 letter, he asserted, "I never questioned your opinions or manner of action in the Russian question, or the Spanish question, or the German question, or the French question!" He repeats this denial here and reports on the situation in the American League.

1. I have your letter of February 10, in which you write that I have not yet replied to your previous letter. By this time you should have received this reply; it is evident that our letters crossed each other in transit. I am very deeply cognizant and appreciative of the confidence in me which your letter implies. Unfortunately, it has become impossible for me to take up once more my position as editor of the *Militant*, in spite of the fact that there is no work at the present time which I am more anxious to do. So that there should be no misunderstanding, I want to emphasize that I did not in any sense refuse to take up my position again because of any differences of opinion I may have with you, nor because of the letters of criticism of my position which you wrote to me and the League. These differences will, I feel sure, prove to be of a far less fundamental character than they may have seemed to you—my previous letter will indicate this. My resignation was determined, however, by the attitude shown and the position taken by the other comrades here, particularly the two who occupy the most responsible positions, comrades Swabeck, the secretary, and Cannon, the editor, an attitude which makes my collaboration, particularly in so vital a position as permanent editor, increasingly difficult.

It is a very difficult and even painful subject to write about, particularly because I feel mainly responsible for not having informed you about the internal situation in the American League before this time—especially when frictions first arose just prior to

the time when I left for a visit to you in 1930. The only justification I may have for my reticence all this time is that, first, I did not want to alarm you unduly with reports about a bad situation in the American League which I hoped would be straightened out with our own forces, and secondly, I hesitated to present to you my views of the situation without the other comrades having the opportunity to be present and give their views. Besides, since 1930, although we have had some bad periods, we have also had long stretches when a very satisfactory collaboration among all the leading comrades was established and the hope created that, by yielding and compromising on both sides and dropping the smaller mutual criticisms for the more important common work, the difficulties would steadily diminish. Here too I emphasize for the purpose of clarity that these differences, from their very origin, had absolutely nothing to do with the differences on international questions which, let us say, exist between us at the present moment.

Unfortunately, at the conference last fall, our internal conflicts broke out once more. A bad situation was created, particularly when Cannon insinuated in a speech that I was "another Naville" or "another Landau." This outrageous accusation was not, of course, based upon any political line I have pursued in the League nor upon my conduct, but upon a sentence contained in one of your last year's letters to me in which you speak of my so-called "hesitations" concerning Naville or Landau, I do not recall off-hand. Now, after my return from Europe, the situation has only become worse. To the disputes we had had before in our leading committee has now been "grafted on," so to speak, the "international questions," in such a manner as to cover up entirely the original source of our friction here. I must tell you frankly that it is not so difficult for some comrades here to vote 100 percent support to the views of the Russian Opposition in any country in the world without reflection—and in some cases while expressing contrary views in private conversations—so long as it does not obligate them to any particular steps at home. You have frequently commented upon this phenomenon in your writings, this "radicalism for export purposes," this sort of "revolutionary dumping." We have some of it here.

The outcome of this situation has been that at our last meeting particularly (concerning an incident about which I have drawn up a statement for the minutes, which will be sent to you), I was

suddenly denounced by Cannon for "organizing a faction of the youth against the National Committee"—an absolutely false and groundless statement—and once more called in "polite language" an American Naville, or Landau, or both. Now, you are aware, comrade Trotsky, that I have always tried to express my opinion on both these questions frankly. Where I was hesitant in making up my mind, I stated it. At no time—and certainly not now—have I supported, politically or organizationally, either the Landau or the Naville faction. I was, in fact, the comrade who delivered the report against them at our national conference. If I were supporting them, I would say so and present my point of view openly. But that has never been the case. At present, however, comrade Cannon has further proclaimed the necessity of conducting an open "campaign" against the so-called "alien elements" in the League, in spite of his acknowledgment that the League will in the meantime be set back and weakened.

Naturally, when I am under so disgraceful an attack and accusation as that I am another Naville or Landau, made by two leading comrades, the basis for a fruitful collaboration is sharply reduced. And the whole business is based upon what I consider a disloyal tearing from their context of certain sentences contained in your recent letters to America. It is unfortunate that certain paragraphs from these letters have been made the foundation for such factional attacks which can only result in counteracting the few years of effective work which we conducted in this country and to which I sought to contribute as much as I could, while others who now accuse me so violently were in comfortable retirement. I am a revolutionist (not since yesterday) whose main capacities lie in speaking and writing, and I have never made pretensions to any other title. But I am not a "journalistic revolutionary" à la Naville and Landau, and those who start such a campaign will not be believed by the comrades here with whom I have worked for years since the Opposition was founded and for years before that in the Party.

I repeat that it is not a pleasant subject to write about now, but "the flask is uncorked, the wine must be drunk." I hope that you will understand the position into which I have been forced here against my will. I want also to repeat, so far as our relations are concerned, that my greatest desire, to use your own words, is "trotz der wichtigen Meinungsverschiedenheiten, daß unsere

Kampfgemeinschaft und Freundschaft auch weiterhin unerschütterlich bleiben wird” [“that our collaboration in struggle and our friendship will remain unshakable despite our important differences of opinion”]. I cannot possibly overestimate their value to me and I want to do all I can to maintain them.

2. Enclosed is another letter to you about Radek and one for comrade Frankel.³¹¹ The “China book” is finally on the press and will appear soon. It is a masterful collection and I am tremendously proud of it. Allow me also to express my unlimited pleasure at reading the first volume of *The History of the Russian Revolution*. Like all the comrades who have been lucky enough to get and read the book (it is expensive, and we are in a crisis!), we look forward expectantly to the second volume. Eastman tells me that it is even superior to the first. The publishers have put on a tremendous advertising campaign for the book. I am sure it will easily outstrip the autobiography in a very short time.

3. I have written an article for a bourgeois paper under a false name, concerning you and your exile in Turkey. It is based upon my own recollections of an unforgettable visit and the material which you gave to comrade Glotzer. You will remember having spoken to him about the article. It is written in a “demi-bon bourgeois” manner so as to be acceptable to the capitalist journals. Comrade Eastman, perhaps through your publishers, will try to sell it. Perhaps the League will yet get a fair piece of money out of the affair.

4. About the new book on Germany, I have written to comrade Frankel. More details as soon as our committee acts on the question.³¹²

PS: Our Jewish and our youth comrades are still waiting expectantly for a few words of greeting from you to their respective papers—which are both meeting with moderate success, especially *Unser Kampf*.



Statement on the Situation in the International Left Opposition

by James P. Cannon

15 March 1932

This statement was submitted to the resident committee on March 15.³¹³ Glotzer and Abern voted against it and submitted their own statements; Shachtman abstained. All three draft statements were submitted to the nonresident members of the National Committee for a vote. After Cannon's draft was approved by the NC majority, the April 18 meeting of the resident committee voted to publish it. Shachtman voted against. The statement was published in the Militant on 23 April 1932.

By the time the resident committee discussed the issue, the proposals contained in Trotsky's December 1932 circular had been implemented. Mill had been removed as I.S. secretary, and the reorganized I.S. had moved to Berlin.³¹⁴

The National Committee, having considered and discussed the most important parts of the material bearing on the present situation in the International Left Opposition and the French section in particular, has come to the following conclusions:

1. The most important feature in the internal life of the international Opposition in the past two years has been the struggle to free the movement from the influence of alien elements who paralyzed its activities by sterile intrigues, distorted its principles in practical application, and hampered its development as the guiding force of the proletarian vanguard. We are and have been fully convinced of the progressive and revolutionary quality of the struggle for these ends which has been led by comrade Trotsky. It has been an unavoidable and necessary stage in the preparation of the International Left Opposition to fulfill its great historic tasks. The National Committee is in full solidarity with the estimate of this struggle and the perspectives of the International Left Opposition outlined in the circular letter of comrade Trotsky under the date of 22 December 1931.

2. The correctness and necessity of this struggle to purge the movement of alien elements is demonstrated, among other things, by the positive results in the German section after the liquidation of the worthless intrigues of Landau and the freeing of the section for its actual revolutionary tasks. The leadership of the German section, which has taken shape in the struggle against Landau and his sterile factional regime, must be given all possible international assistance and support in its tremendous responsibilities and opportunities. The necessity of the struggle for internal renovation is shown with no less force—although in a negative manner—by the present state of affairs in France. The demoralization there ensues directly from the fact that the two-year struggle has not been brought to a conclusion.

3. In our opinion the present situation in the French Ligue—which ought to be a matter of grave concern to the entire international Opposition—is not a new one. We regard it rather as the rear end of the struggle to clear the section of the influence of unassimilable and careerist elements, which has been unduly prolonged. The task there, as we see it, is not to seek a solution of the crisis from the standpoint of the episodic questions and differences. This only blurs the real issue. What is necessary is a decisive course toward the liquidation of the crisis by a firm stand against the representatives of the disintegrating tendencies. Among these we count the leaders of the Jewish Group, and we particularly condemn their attempt to set up a nationality group as a faction within the Ligue and their resignation from the National Committee in the name of such a group. Such methods and practices are incompatible with Communist organization. No less harmful in the drawn-out internal crisis of the Ligue have been the ambiguous and diplomatic maneuvers of Naville, against which we have recorded ourselves in our previous resolution.³¹⁵ In our opinion it is most necessary for the French Ligue to bring the internal controversy to a conclusion, to draw clear and precise lines, and make a selection on that basis.

4. The proposal of comrade Trotsky for the reorganization of the International Secretariat by constituting it out of representatives of the most important sections who will be responsible to their sections is the most feasible plan under the circumstances. As the experience of the past few years has shown, the international

Opposition has not yet developed to the point where a secretariat based on the selection of persons—free from accountability to the respective sections—could fulfill the office. The secretariat must become a responsible body standing above the intrigues and helping to liquidate them. We are of the opinion that comrade Mill misused the office of international secretary and erred fatally by identifying himself with the factional struggle in the French Ligue against the leadership. Thereby he helped to negate the whole progressive struggle against Landau-Naville-Rosmer and, at the same time, undermined the authority and discredited the International Secretariat. The reorganization of the secretariat as a responsible body will help to shield it against such a fate by rendering it less susceptible to personal moods and vacillations.

5. The difficulties of distance, etc., make a timely and effective participation of the American League in the internal questions of the European sections extremely difficult and preclude altogether any pretensions on our part to play a leading role in their solution. We must not undertake that. Nevertheless we consider it desirable to participate more directly in the work of the International Secretariat through an elected representative and the National Committee will propose to select such a representative of the American League as soon as possible. It is necessary to acknowledge a slackness in our international activities and duties, the nature of which and its basic causes have been accurately described in comrade Trotsky's circular letter. In order for our League to be useful in the solution of the internal problems of the European sections, and to educate itself in internationalism in the process, it must firmly organize a *collective* participation. The National Committee as a whole must familiarize itself with the international questions and bring a collective judgment to bear upon them. The most important material must be translated and supplied to the League membership for information and discussion. The progressive elements in all sections, which are struggling for the liquidation of circle psychology, sterile intellectualism, and worthless factional intrigues, and for the consolidation of genuinely revolutionary cadres, must be assured at every step that they have a conscious and resolute ally in the American League.

Draft Statement on International Questions

by Albert Glotzer³¹⁶

15 March 1932

When it was first submitted to the resident committee on February 3, Cannon moved to accept this draft as the basis for a National Committee statement, with some additional points that he would incorporate. The motion passed, with Shachtman voting against and Abern abstaining. But when the resident committee considered the question again on March 15, Glotzer refused to accept Cannon's edited statement and resubmitted his original.

Glotzer condemns the action of the Spanish section, which, despite Mill's removal as I.S. secretary, had nominated him to be their representative on the new I.S. At the resident committee meeting on February 3, Shachtman voted against a motion to condemn the Spanish section for this act.

1. The National Committee of the Communist League of America endorses and accepts the general contents and perspectives for the International Left Opposition contained in the letter of comrade Trotsky (dated 22 December 1931) addressed to all national sections affiliated to the ILO.
2. The international situation, at the center of which stands Germany, offers good prospects for growth of the Left Opposition. Thus far the growth of the national sections has been a slow one. The reasons for this are in part due to the objective conditions. They were also due to the composition of the national sections which have in great measure acted as forces standing in the way of healthy development of the Left Opposition (Urbahns, Landau, Naville, etc.).
3. This process of clarifying and purifying the ranks of the International Left Opposition is by no means completed. There continue to remain remnants of such elements in the LO, particularly in France. We regard as absolutely essential a liquidation of all remnants of the past and those arising now that stand

in the way of a healthy development. We consider the struggle of the Jewish Group of the French Ligue against its leadership as a false one that plays into the hands of the Landau-Naville-Rosmer group. In this sense we reject the role played by the secretary of the International Secretariat as one acting contrary to the interests of the ILO. Any attempt to consider small and nonprincipled questions as the basis for the dispute in the French Ligue would be totally incorrect. Such a conception overlooks one of the main fundamental questions confronting the whole International Left Opposition: the purging of its ranks of all alien elements and the development of genuine Opposition cadres.

4. In this situation the International Secretariat could have played an enormous role. It failed to do so. Instead it injected itself as a factional instrument in the struggle against the leadership of the French Ligue, thus negating the struggle that that leadership carried on for two years against Landau-Naville-Rosmer and giving the latter direct aid in their struggle against the line of the International Left Opposition. We are in entire agreement with the proposal of comrade Trotsky on the reorganization of the secretariat. We consider that this is the best way possible to effect a stronger center of the International Left Opposition. But to merely accept this proposal is insufficient. Such a proposal must be carried out. In this sense we consider the action of the Spanish section in selecting a non-Spanish representative for their organization, after formally accepting the proposal of comrade Trotsky, to be carrying out their acceptance incorrectly and approaching the questions confronting the Left Opposition from a factional viewpoint. The reorganization of the secretariat and its strengthening therefrom will help toward a general strengthening of the entire Left Opposition.

5. The National Committee considers it desirable to participate in the work of the International Secretariat through an active representative. We are in favor of the election of a representative of the American League to the I.S. and the NC shall proceed to realize this requirement at the earliest possible moment.

6. The National Committee considers the acceptance and carrying out of the proposals of comrade Trotsky as a step in the right direction toward building the International Left Opposition on a more solid foundation.

Draft Statement on the ILO

by Martin Abern³¹⁷

15 March 1932

This statement was submitted by Abern to the resident committee. In subsequent voting by the National Committee it was endorsed by Maurice Spector.

The International Left Opposition, because of objective and subjective circumstances, has not had a rapid growth and development. The factors objectively are maturing more quickly, particularly in Germany, for a strengthening of the International Left Opposition. Internally, the process of clarification and unification is far from completed. In various countries there existed for years Opposition groups which never had anything in common with Bolshevism and only compromised the Left Opposition by sympathy for it. The Paz group in France is outstanding in this respect. Urbahns in Germany is another. Methods introduced by Landau into the International Left Opposition were obstacles to its development. It is necessary to dispose finally and in a principled manner of the issues, basic or secondary, involved in the disputes with Naville and others. For the most part, Naville's position is unknown to the American comrades; of such as we are aware ambiguity is noticeable.

Outstanding is the need of the formation of an International Secretariat capable of disseminating information to the sections of the International Left Opposition and to develop as a guide to it. The existing International Secretariat has not served the desired purpose. It would be most desirable to have an International Secretariat which has been elected through the medium of another international conference of the Left Opposition. Pending this and the required preliminary measures, developments, discussions, and clarification which are needed before the convening of such a conference, an International Secretariat in which the leading sections are represented by delegates elected by the specific national sections should be constituted. The American League should take

steps to be represented at the earliest moment by such a representative. Any other form of contact for purposes of information or participation in the life of the International Left Opposition is obviously unsatisfactory and deprives the American League of a need and duty.



A Definite Conflict of Views

Letter by Arne Swabeck to the
International Secretariat and Leon Trotsky³¹⁸

2 April 1932

With this letter Swabeck enclosed Shachtman's statement on Swabeck's article "Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics!" as well as the reply he and Cannon had drafted, dated 22 March 1932. The reply, "Internal Problems of the CLA," was submitted to the resident committee on April 4 and subsequently published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 3 (July 1932).³¹⁹ In it, Cannon and Swabeck explained:

The strength of the American section of the Opposition, and its advantages over a number of the European sections—as we have maintained against many critics (Weisbord, Carter, and others) who saw the thing upside down—consisted in the homogeneous group, trained and prepared by years of struggle, as a single faction, in the Party. The leading group, which had been assembled over a period of years in the Party struggles, was united by a community of opinions on the concrete questions of domestic policy as well as by an accord with the fundamental principled line of the International Left Opposition. It was this experience and this general homogeneity which gave the leadership an exceptional authority and enabled it to guide the organization firmly; to reduce capitulationism to insignificance and to liquidate oppositional attempts without crises and without even serious internal disturbances (Fox, Weisbord, Malkin).

But during this whole period, in which a general external unanimity was displayed, the organization became aware, from time to time, of alarming frictions within the National Committee which gave the impression of personal quarrels. This state of affairs was signaled by the disruption of the work of the committee for several months after the first conference in 1929, by protracted abstentions on the part of

*individual members, and especially by an open conflict at the second conference over the selection of the new NC.*³²⁰

The facts which were known gave rise to uneasiness and dissatisfaction among the members, and to demands for an explanation of the political reasons for the friction. To all such demands the members of the committee answered that there were no serious differences on questions of the League policy. And this answer was not a deception of the organization, as some comrades charged. Episodic disputes, of course, occurred quite frequently, and at times there were heated discussions, but when it came to the actual formulation of the committee's position on the important questions, we found a common language. This was the case at the First National Conference in 1929; at the plenum in the spring of 1930; and in the resolutions presented to the Second National Conference in August 1931.

In spite of that, the delegates to the second conference witnessed a struggle over the new NC, initiated by comrade Shachtman's attempt to change its composition, which they were obliged to decide. From the acrimony of this dispute it became obvious there to the conference delegates, and especially to us, that the unity of the committee was by no means as firm as the unanimous political resolutions seemed to indicate. Nevertheless we assured the delegates of our confidence that the conflicts would be overcome in the course of common work and comradely discussion without plunging into a crisis.

*These hopes were not realized. We have not been able to construe the conduct of comrade Shachtman since the conference otherwise than as a series of blows to the organization. And finally, at the meeting of the NC held on 15 March 1932, comrade Shachtman presented a document couched in such terms and filled with such accusations against us as to preclude the possibility of harmonious collaboration. Rejecting our proposals for a prior discussion of the questions within the committee, comrade Shachtman had already gone outside the committee with this attack. It has become the material for a factional campaign in the New York branch on the part of comrades who have been at odds with the NC right along. Comrades Abern and Glotzer have associated themselves with this document of comrade Shachtman. As a result of all this it is obvious that the organization is placed before a situation which cannot be solved by the committee itself. Nothing remains but to submit the disputes to the organization as a whole and, simultaneously, to transmit the material to the other sections.*³²¹

The document went on to insist, "No grown-up communist will believe for a moment that a National Committee of more or less experienced people can be disrupted overnight for the sake of a remote historical dispute or an insult to a comrade. The situation can become comprehensible only if the real causes are laid bare." While thoroughly refuting

Shachtman's obfuscations regarding the Engels introduction, Cannon and Swabeck explained that the dispute centered on the following issues:

- 1. The position of our League on the struggle within the International Left Opposition for the consolidation of revolutionary cadres and the break with alien elements and tendencies which stood in the way of this consolidation.*
- 2. The conclusions and lessons to be drawn from this international struggle of the past three years. And, organically connected with the first two—*
- 3. The attitude of the leadership of the League toward various nonrevolutionary and intellectualistic tendencies in the New York branch.³²²*

I am enclosing herewith several documents which as they stand are self-explanatory, and I will therefore in this letter add only a few comments as to the reason for their appearance.

There are two main documents, one signed by comrade Shachtman and one signed by comrade Cannon and myself. We beg you to excuse the fact that the latter, the document signed by us, is so lengthy; but that was unavoidable, as we found it necessary to discuss an accumulation of issues. One of these issues is our difference of views with comrade Shachtman on the situation within various sections of the International Left Opposition. From our document you will notice that these differences are not merely of today, but began over a year ago. However, these issues and differences in the past were not so clear, hence we had hopes, kept alive by many personal as well as formal discussions and concessions made on our part, that the differences could be ironed out in the normal course of development. These hopes had not entirely vanished, even after comrade Shachtman's recently more outspoken views on disputes within the European sections. But with the presentation of comrade Shachtman's statement, to which ours is an answer, the differences have assumed the form of a definite conflict of views, which cannot be solved without a complete political discussion and decision by our League membership.

I am also enclosing three drafts for resolution by our National Committee on the international question. This is merely for the purpose of further information, as the one marked "Draft by Cannon" is the adopted resolution, the committee members not residing in New York having since recorded their vote. It may seem strange that responsible committee members can arrive at a point

where as many as three drafts need be submitted and voted upon for a final resolution—all three, at least formally, endorsing the views of comrade Trotsky's circular letter of 22 December 1931. Comrade Cannon and myself were of the opinion that mere endorsement of the views of the circular letter was not sufficient, but that we should also endeavor to formulate a precise attitude to the questions raised and to the principled issues of conflict within the European sections. In that it appeared that we had the agreement also of comrade Glotzer. He voted with us for a combination of the two original drafts submitted by himself and by comrade Cannon. Hence the resolution marked "Draft by Cannon," and now adopted, was really this combination. But since the presentation of the statement by comrade Shachtman, we noticed that comrade Glotzer changed his views and reverted to his original draft. Comrade Shachtman voted against all three draft resolutions and, strangely, although both comrades Glotzer and Abern at least formally endorse the views of comrade Trotsky's circular letter, they found it possible to associate themselves with comrade Shachtman's statement.

Comrade Cannon and myself, in agreement with other comrades, have taken the initiative in proposing that these documents be submitted to the membership for their discussion and decision upon all of the issues raised. We also wish to assure you that we will sincerely endeavor, while this discussion takes place, to keep the League functioning normally in its external work, even though it means for a number of comrades the assuming of double duties and double burdens.

We shall keep you informed about all further developments around the conflicting issues within our League, with the object of presenting every step contemplated to our international movement for its judgment.



On the Motion for a Plenary Session of the NC

by Max Shachtman³²³

4 April 1932

Shachtman appended this statement to the minutes of the resident committee meeting of April 4, where Cannon and Swabeck proposed that Shachtman's statement on Swabeck's article, along with their reply, be submitted to the membership for discussion with the perspective of holding an early national conference. Shachtman insisted instead that a National Committee plenum be held as soon as possible. With Glotzer and Abern's support, Shachtman's motion carried. The committee agreed to distribute the material immediately to the nonresident NC members and poll them about holding a plenum.

The aim of the Cannon-Swabeck statement, tacitly avowed at the resident committee meeting, is to split the League, as rapidly as physically possible, and at that on a basis devoid of genuine principles or true facts. This will be more than adequately proved in the coming discussion.

A split in the League *may* be unavoidable—particularly in view of the reckless determination of its initiators, but that remains for others besides Cannon and Swabeck to decide. After three years of deliberate concealment of the disputes in the National Committee and even the persistent denial of their existence, nothing but the most conscientious preparation and guidance of the now-more-than-ever necessary open discussion in the membership can obviate the setback which Cannon and Swabeck are seeking to impose upon the League.

A split is the most radical and sharpest method of resolving the disputes. At the very least, therefore, it is the full National Committee that should first discuss the problem exhaustively and take the full responsibility for what is to happen. To attempt this by correspondence and not by a full meeting of the whole committee is totally inadequate. It reduces the nonresident members to the rank of ordinary League members, with no decisive direct-

ing voice and vote. Three years ago, in 1929, when the committee's internal disputes were of a much milder and embryonic nature, a plenary committee meeting was called in New York.³²⁴ By the same token, such a meeting is even more necessary today. More, at the last conference Cannon pointed to comrades Dunne, Skoglund, and Oehler as those who were not directly involved in the disputes and whose objectivity would be invaluable for the committee and the League in the event of internal friction. That being so, their presence and decisive (not letter-writing) participation in this *vital and fundamental* question is required now more than ever. Else they must become more or less passive onlookers to the speedy splitting of the League by C-S.

It is objected that the "differences are so irreconcilable" that a plenum cannot solve them. In that sense, neither will the planned conference "solve them," for Cannon and Swabek construe this conference as the consecration of the split, as the place where the organization will virtually be confronted with a *fait accompli*. The full NC is the responsible leader of the organization—not the bare 50 percent of it which the resident committee constitutes. It must take full responsibility, therefore, for so serious a step as a split, if that is how it decides. It must issue or try to issue the basic document upon which the discussion should be organized. It must organize and regulate the discussion. Otherwise, it should acknowledge its fictitious and decorative character or its purely consultative function and no more.

A plenum will "cost money" and the expense will be "duplicated" by the subsequent conference. The argument is worthless. Such considerations might have weight if some "routine matter" were involved. What is involved, it should be emphasized, is the splitting of the League.

Let others talk loftily about "formalities." But the best interests of the Opposition will be subserved by this procedure: The plenum must meet immediately. It must seek to draw up the basic documents. It must arrange for the discussion in a responsible manner. It must allow adequate time not only for the League to discuss, but for the intervention of all the national sections and particularly comrade Trotsky. To act otherwise shows either light-mindedness or significant, impatient haste—the attempt to make good, at a convenient "conjuncture," for the neglect and concealment of the past.

Statement on Holding Plenum

by James P. Cannon³²⁵

4 April 1932

Cannon appended the following statement to the April 4 resident committee minutes. In a letter to Dunne penned a few days later, Cannon argued that Dunne and Skoglund should agree to a plenum, despite the financial hardship involved:

Since the committee meeting we have talked with a few of the most responsible members of the branch here and they seem to favor the idea of a plenum before the conference on the ground that it may give the others a final opportunity to retreat a bit before it is too late. We have no reason to be opposed to this, as long as it does not convey the idea of leaving things where they are now.³²⁶

Dunne, Skoglund, and Oehler voted for a plenum. In a subsequent letter to Dunne, Cannon wrote:

We want the plenum to express itself definitely and firmly on every question that has been raised in the documents already presented, and others which will no doubt supplement them. We cannot promise that the plenum will solve the crisis, but it will take the first and most necessary step toward that solution by letting the organization know who's who and what's what.³²⁷

The holding of a plenum prior to the opening of the discussion would, of course, be the normal procedure and would present certain advantages. The question remains whether the out-of-town members can overcome the physical and material difficulties involved in view of the fact that another journey will be necessitated soon afterward for the conference. The nonresident members themselves must say the deciding word on the question.

It is quite obvious that the disputes are of such a nature that they must be handed over to the organization for decision. For this a conference, preceded by a thorough discussion in the branches, is necessary. To delay the discussion and the conference very long would condemn the League to demoralization. These disputes cannot be left undecided. The protracted crisis in the French Ligue is a warning example in this respect.

If the nonresident members of the committee can see their way clear to attend both a plenum and a conference, then they should decide to hold the plenum at an early date.



The Real Basis of Our Differences

Letter by Albert Glotzer to Leon Trotsky³²⁸

5 April 1932

This is excerpted from a letter that also dealt with Glotzer's recent national tour and the financial problems of Unser Kampf, the CLA's Yiddish paper launched in January.

I come now to the more important question of our internal situation. It is without hesitation that I write because what transpired at last night's meeting of the National Committee demands that I write this to you. Comrades Cannon and Swabeck introduced a lengthy statement on the situation in the League that without equivocation *proposes a split* in the organization. Comrade Shachtman charged them with deliberately fostering such an action—to which neither comrade Cannon nor Swabeck made any denial.

What are the circumstances that brought this about? And since when has the American League an *internal* situation? I am prepared now to write at length on this question. Before I do this, however, I want to make an apology for my part. I refer to my deliberate failure to report such a situation during my stay in Kadiköy. I recognize that no greater error or crime was committed on my part either to the organization or yourself. I am prepared to suffer any consequences because of this—reflecting upon it I am ready to admit that this was a gross error. Even more so, since you twice directed questions to me revolving around this question and both times I denied that we had any internal situation in the American League. The reasons for my actions in Kadiköy find their basis in America. You recall that I left for Europe immediately after the conference. Before my departure the entire National Committee discussed the matter. An agreement

was reached that I was not to bring these problems before you for two reasons: one, not to cause you any undue alarm; secondly (and this is the reason for the first), because we felt that it was possible to render a solution to the questions here in the States without carrying it out further. It was with this understanding that I left and it appears that I abided by this decision only too well. There is no question in my mind, however, that this was an error—not only because the situation is what it is now. I assure you that I felt extremely uncomfortable since the conference because of this, and now that it is quite clear that we are unable to find a solution to our internal problem among ourselves, it is necessary that the whole matter be opened up and a solution found in that manner. Our efforts to cover up the situation only acted as a cancer upon our movement.

The situation opened anew with the now famous "Carter issue." The minutes of the National Committee and comrade Shachtman's statement undoubtedly acquainted you with this. In answer to comrade Shachtman's statement Cannon and Swabek introduced last night a statement that *pretends* to discuss the *whole* situation; its history, past, and present. The document, over 50 pages typewritten double-spaced, revolves around two points: Carter and the international questions. Around these two points the two comrades propose to discuss the *whole* situation. Both of them are *entirely false*. And why? Because the differences date back not to the first international conference, not to the Landau and Naville struggles, but even before comrade Shachtman made his first trip to Europe; yes, even prior to our first conference which launched the International Left Opposition in the States.

We do not regard the Carter incident in the light that Cannon and Swabek do. We proposed to settle that problem in itself. The two comrades refused—and have made it a central issue charging that comrades Shachtman, Abern, and myself have organized or support a faction against the NC on the "worst possible basis, the youth." I regard this as a false and dishonest argument. On the question of the international "differences," how do these comrades account for the following: Neither comrades Spector, Abern, nor myself are in agreement with Shachtman on the French question (we do not regard that Shachtman has fundamental differences on international questions), yet we find ourselves in agreement on everything else confronting the American League. What

comrade Cannon and, along with him, comrade Swabeck contend is the following: that our differences began on international questions, and that these are the decisive questions and govern the whole situation. We reject this position as a dishonest attempt at an examination of our differences and a purely factional misuse of the letter that you sent comrade Shachtman in criticism of his views on the French situation. It was on the basis of this letter that comrade Swabeck told me following my return that it would have been best to inform you about the situation here! Why so? Because they thought that because of this letter they would be able to make false use of it against us. What their intentions really are is the following: to divert attention from the *real* questions to those of secondary, third- and fourth-rate importance or bearing on the American questions. Even if it were true that international questions were the decisive ones in preventing a collaboration, would that then be the basis for a split, as their statement indicates? I don't believe so. But in order to sketch briefly the real basis of our differences, I will in the following pages give you a brief resumé of the history of our internal situation from the period of our existence as an organization of the Left Opposition.

Our expulsion and first conference gave a mighty impulse to the American Opposition. The conference established the left on an organized plane, laid the plans for the building of a print shop and the issuance of a weekly *Militant*, and generally began to broaden our activities in an organized manner. Comrade Cannon was elected national secretary of the Left Opposition in America. Following the conference there was a lapse in the administrative work of the League. Communications remained unanswered; connections were lost because of a failure in the central directive organ. There was a general retrogression in our ranks. I was then living in Chicago and a member of the National Committee. After a period of months we learned that comrade Shachtman was the new editor of the *Militant* and comrade Abern secretary of the League. I should add that comrade Cannon was not only secretary but elected editor as well. With this change I protested to the New York committee, because these changes were made without consultation with the full committee, and confronted them with a demand for an explanation not only of these changes but also with regard to the poor functioning of the center—the lack of directives, communications, and a weakening of the drive for the weekly *Militant*.

It was on the basis of my protests that I was able to learn that the situation in the center was a precarious one. I should add that during this period Cannon was experiencing personal difficulties which did have an effect on him. But this in no way excuses his position at the time. He was advancing prior to the conference reasons why the conference should not be held. He was literally forced by the other comrades to come to Chicago for the conference which was to initiate the Left Opposition as an organization in the States. He came to the conference unprepared for the great tasks that confronted it. Following the conference he failed to carry through the work assigned him—which resulted in a definite decline of the organization after its splendid start at the first conference. Upon the protests of comrades Spector, Abern, and Shachtman for his failure to commit his duties in a proper fashion, Cannon reacted personally to their *comradely* protests and requests, charging them at the same time with factional aims! He broke with comrade Spector, whom we consider our leading theoretician, calling him a “Pepper.” This situation was overcome and the work proceeded without much aid from comrade Cannon, who, it must be remembered, was considered the leader of the movement. And it should be borne in mind that during this period the drive for the printing plant and the weekly *Militant* was in progress.

The situation remained unchanged. Comrades Abern and Shachtman continued to carry through the drive for the weekly. Spector in the meantime returned to Canada primarily because of the internal difficulties and the economic pressure confronting him in New York. The weekly was finally launched. Comrade Cannon was conspicuous by absence. He was not to be seen when the first issue of the weekly appeared. We considered this the greatest achievement of the American Opposition. *For a period of two months, during the most trying days of the weekly, comrade Cannon was absent.* We tried during all this time to obtain an explanation from Cannon, since on political questions there was apparent unanimity. Comrade Swabeck, who was acquainted with the situation, tried to explain it away by declaring that this was just one of comrade Cannon’s *moods*. But even comrade Swabeck, who remained Cannon’s staunchest supporter since the inception of the Opposition in this country, declared in the presence of comrade Shachtman and two Chicago comrades that it might be necessary to expel Cannon unless he turned about-face. It is not necessary for me to

add that this was not our position. Toward the end of the year 1929 comrade Shachtman and comrade Abern made the following proposal to the full committee: that comrade Shachtman shall go to see comrade Trotsky with the aim of establishing direct contact with him, establishing also contact with the European Oppositions, and obtain aid from the former for the weekly which was then experiencing its first difficulties. Comrade Cannon opposed this question entirely. He explained his position as follows: We could not carry on with the weekly and it was necessary to retreat. And that he, Cannon, was opposed to any financial aid because that was a form of subsidy and subsidies were the basis for the bureaucratic degeneration in the Comintern—we must not become a party to such methods. If we cannot carry the weekly without help from comrade Trotsky, then we should retrench and go back to a semi-monthly or a monthly. Not one member of the committee concurred in the position of Cannon. Swabeck alone had reservations and wavered, but even he voted for Shachtman to go across. Every other member of the committee voted likewise. Why? Because it was apparent that the weekly *Militant* was our big arm in the struggle and must be maintained, if possible; that we should not give it up so quickly if there are possibilities of saving it.

When the full committee decided that comrade Shachtman should go across, I was called to New York to replace Shachtman in the national office. Upon my arrival in New York, I had occasion to speak to comrade Cannon even prior to speaking to the other comrades. He asked me why I supported the position that comrade Shachtman shall go to Europe. I told him then that the main question for us was the maintenance of the weekly *Militant* and secondly that in this manner we would be able to establish for the first time connections with both comrade Trotsky and the international sections of the Opposition. Comrade Cannon then raised once more the question of subsidy—and declared that he could not subscribe to such an act. He was opposed to subsidy—that it was necessary that we retreat and give up the weekly. Upon my reply to his question as to who would be left in charge of the national office during Shachtman's absence, that Abern would handle it, Cannon replied that this was impossible since comrade Abern, not having a political stable opinion from one day to the next, could not do this. I should add that during this whole period Cannon still stood aloof from the organization and did not give it

the benefit of his aid. I should also add that in the period that Abern was in charge of the national office, it enjoyed one of its best periods. Comrade Abern is an old revolutionist of high standing in the movement for his extreme devotion and abilities. That was the first intimation directly that I had with regard to what comrade Cannon thought during this time. At the next meeting of the National Committee at which we made the final decision for Max to leave, Cannon made a statement of the following character: By the decision for Shachtman to go across you make it impossible for me to collaborate! And during Shachtman's absence, Cannon made good this declaration. He refused to collaborate in this period when we were in need of help and facing great difficulties.

The period following comrade Shachtman's return from Europe was one in which all our efforts were spent in trying to maintain the weekly *Militant*—efforts made without support from comrade Cannon. We failed to do this with the result that we returned for a time to the semimonthly, although not one of us gave up the thought of returning at the first opportunity to the weekly. Matters internally did not improve. Spector, who came to New York to function as editor while Shachtman went on tour, was forced once more because of economic difficulties to return to Canada. We found it impossible to bring about meetings of the National Committee. In search of a temporary aid to this situation, comrade Shachtman proposed to co-opt three comrades of the New York branch to serve as members of the committee and in that way perhaps build a functioning center. This carried through with the vote of every member of the National Committee with the exception of comrade Cannon. But it should be added that this act helped to prevent a complete collapse of the organization. Upon our insistence a full plenary meeting of the National Committee was called (May 1930) to discuss one question: the problem of the relationships between comrade Cannon on the one hand and Shachtman, Abern, Spector, and myself on the other.³²⁹ We were of the opinion that perhaps a full meeting would help to solve the problem. It failed to do so! Comrade Cannon acknowledged that he was in *some* respects wrong, but that he was *misunderstood*; the comrades did not take into consideration his personal conditions; that we were too violent; summing up in all his remarks the need of a *retreat*. All our efforts at this plenum

were directed at trying to create a situation in which collaboration was possible. We succeeded for a few weeks after the plenum in reaching such a condition. But it did not last. Cannon reverted once more to his old antics. The whole period following the plenum was the lowest reached by the organization. I am ready to say that if it were not for the *lone, individual* efforts of comrade Shachtman, who in that period acted as secretary, editor, office manager, and whatnot, the center would never have existed. Our financial conditions were such that we could not keep more than one comrade in the office. But the lack of collaboration was even more responsible. Cannon felt that he was treated rudely, his toes were stepped on, that the comrades did not *appreciate* his long service to the movement, etc., etc. With the co-optation of the three members of the New York branch (among them comrade Lewit), we managed to pull through this period.

Toward the close of the year 1930, comrade Swabeck notified us of his intentions to come to New York. We greeted this action because all of us felt that comrade Swabeck, because of his experience in the movement and because what we thought at the time was a certain *impartiality*, would really be the factor to bring about a healthy collaboration of the center. But we were sadly disappointed. The first two months of his stay in New York Swabeck spent trying to convince us all that Cannon was the logical leader of the American proletariat and we should make allowances, step back, forget the past, and accept him as the "*chief*" of the American Opposition. There is no need to add that we had nothing in common with such a point of view. We did not consider this to be the problem of the American Opposition. We were more concerned with establishing a functioning center, preparing once more the ground for the weekly *Militant*, and expanding our activities. We did manage to build again a functioning center. Upon our motion the drive was again made for the weekly *Militant*. We succeeded in reestablishing it. Up until the conference there was apparent collaboration. I should also add that in that year the New York comrades, up until the eve of the second conference, functioned on the National Committee. Of these comrades, Lewit in particular distinguished himself by his work on the committee. He is an old comrade, even though young in years, extremely capable, and whom we regarded at all times as one of the leading comrades in our organization.

The preparations for the conference were made without difficulties. On political questions there was unity. Comrade Shachtman prepared the political thesis, made the main report of the conference. The conference went along without much participation from comrade Cannon. However, under the international report, he spoke at length. And what was the essence of his remarks: We were Navilles, Landaus, etc. A purely factional speech, which, we later learned from Swabeck, was purposely planned. This came very suddenly and certainly unexpectedly. But we said nothing about it. However, in the elections for the incoming National Committee deep differences arose. In the meeting of the National Committee where we discussed the membership of the new committee a split vote occurred. Over what question? Comrade Shachtman nominated Lewit to be added as a new member to the committee. Comrades Swabeck and Cannon refused to agree and the conference stood still while we were trying to arrive at a solution to this question. What were the arguments against the nomination of Lewit? From Cannon and Swabeck: *In the event of differences on the committee, Lewit would not vote for Cannon.* They stated that they were unaware of such a proposal from comrade Shachtman, although in discussing the question of a new committee, I personally mentioned to Swabeck some two months before the conference of my intentions to propose Lewit, and Shachtman did likewise to comrade Cannon. The opposition to Lewit was governed purely by factional considerations by Cannon and Swabeck. We brought the question into the conference and were defeated.

Since the conference, the situation has not changed. The committee finds itself at odds. The two comrades are trying to avert a discussion on the *real* differences and to falsely turn them onto the international questions, about which comrade Cannon knows little. What comrade Cannon originally developed was the theory of *continuity of leadership*, which in essence means the exclusion of new blood on the National Committee. This theory is the outgrowth of another one: *that the Opposition in this country is the outgrowth, and the logical and necessary outgrowth at that, of the old Cannon group in the Party.* We reject this theory and even fought over it. We are not the “logical,” “historical,” nor “necessary” outgrowth of the old Party group. On the contrary—we broke decisively with the past. We are a Left Opposition today! The birth of the Cannon group in the Party came about in a split with Foster over

what question? Over the question of the support of the Comintern decision to institute the right-wing Lovestone group into the leadership of the Party! Yes, and the Cannon group broke on the basis: that we must support the CI decision. The Cannon group made unity with Lovestone—!—against the Foster group in the Party, in order to win the Party to the support of the Comintern decision which instituted the right wing into leadership! That is our genesis in the Party. We refuse to perpetuate our past. We broke with it completely—we started anew as a Left Opposition. Then Cannon developed the question as follows: In the American Opposition there is a difference between the old, experienced, and tried comrades and the young, inexperienced comrades who are trying to run away with themselves! This is really an argument that is supposed to support conservatism. Further, he developed the argument that in reality our differences are between the proletarian elements, Cannon and Swabeck, as against the intellectuals, Spector, Abern, and Shachtman. All of these are *disloyal, dishonest, and false arguments*. But these are the basis for both Cannon and Swabeck's conservatism with regard to the weekly *Militant*, their hesitancy on the issuance of the Jewish paper which they regard as a drain upon the organization and not as one of its strongest features, and their opposition to the issuance of the youth paper.

These are the questions that always confronted the organization: whether or not we should go forward or "retrench," as comrade Cannon puts it. And last night they introduced their statement, forgetting the whole past, its difference, and attempting to discuss the situation in the American Opposition around what: the Carter article and international questions!

It is with all the foregoing in mind that I have decided to write you at length. A solution to our problems must take place, but they will not take place on the basis of the statement of Cannon and Swabeck, who attempt to forget the history of the American Opposition, to divert it upon extraneous questions, and who in essence propose a split. We will fight with all our determination against such a step and to prevent it. I hope that we shall be successful.

I have not written with the aim of alarming you. I try to write soberly about these matters, bearing in mind all the time the responsibilities to our movement. That I failed to inform you is

certainly inexcusable and I stand ready to bear responsibility for it. But I wish now to acquaint you briefly with the above resumé. There is a great deal more to be said and material likewise that you should have.

What were the proposals of Cannon and Swabeck at last night's meeting of the committee? They proposed that we immediately begin the discussion of the internal situation in the ranks of the League. This discussion should begin with the publication of an internal bulletin; the first number to contain their statement, comrade Shachtman's statement, the statements of Carter! That then shall be the basis for a discussion of the internal situation in the League. We proposed a different method. First that we shall hold a full plenum meeting in a short few weeks, that the plenum of the National Committee shall decide how the discussion shall begin, that the full plenary session shall have a statement on the situation—so that a proper basis can be given to the discussion. They would not agree to this proper procedure. It remains now for the other members of the committee to decide how this discussion shall proceed: either by first holding a plenum of the full committee or to begin the discussion immediately without such a plenary session.

I do not here take up a number of problems. This letter is already overlong. I have written this in order to acquaint you in a brief manner with some of the more pertinent problems that confronted the organization. There is a great deal more to be said and I hope that it will not be long before you can have all the material before you—which is extremely necessary in order to understand how matters stand here.

* * * * *

There is only one other question I wish to take up with you. In one of your interviews you state in your conclusions on America that "a labor party is inevitable."³³⁰ This came as a complete surprise to us since at our last conference we were of the opinion that this was not so. Our position was based on the first discussions that comrade Shachtman held with you in Prinkipo and in line with the position of some of the comrades in the American League. I should like more information with regard to this question, because already the Lovestoneites and Weisbordites are greet-

ing this change on the part of Trotsky and saying that the American League was caught with its pants down. I would appreciate it very much if you were to clear this very important question up.

I shall write again in a few days.



Report on National Tour

by Albert Glotzer³³¹

11 April 1932

This report on Glotzer's national tour, February 19 through March 13, was circulated within the CLA and the international.

The tour allowed for a firsthand observation of the situation in the American Left Opposition, its external political influence, and its organizational position. What is outstanding is the growth of the political influence of the Left Opposition everywhere. My meetings, even those held under adverse conditions, were above expectation. There is a general growth of sympathy for our movement and it is possible to say that we are slowly breaking through the crust of isolation from the Communist and revolutionary workers. In a short while, we should be able to count upon a definite corps of sympathizers and new members for our organization.

Simultaneously with this growth in the political influence of the Left Opposition, there are weaknesses organizationally that hinder somewhat the utilization of the improved conditions for work and transforming them into positive gains. The economic crisis has played no little role in causing some demoralization in certain sections of the League. The younger comrades in other branches are carrying the brunt of the work on their shoulders, while some of the older comrades play a minor role and others dropped out of activity entirely.

One of the chief weaknesses of the organization is the absence of an inner-Party fraction. Nowhere do we have such a functioning organ. In addition our connections with the Party are extremely meager and in many cities we have no connection with it. Our

contacts are few, with the result that the Left Opposition reflects little of the Party life and also knows little of what is taking place in its ranks. It will become all the more necessary in the coming months to direct a great deal of effort in the creation of such fractions and drawing closer to the Party and its life.

Our press remains the most important activity in the present stage of our existence. While some improvements are noticeable generally, the organization has a long way to go toward an improvement in the circulation of the *Militant*, *Unser Kampf*, *Communistes*, and *Young Spartacus*. In consideration of its importance, the *Militant* does not enjoy the circulation that it should and the branches generally do not make sufficient efforts toward an increase of its subscriptions or bundle sales. While on tour I found that not one branch was engaged in a planned and concentrated drive for the *Militant*. The bright spot in our publication is held by *Unser Kampf*, which demonstrated that it has a definite place among our publications. Its circulation is increasing constantly and its growing circle of readers helped to build up our meetings. The Jewish paper is highly thought of and we will be able to count upon positive returns in a short time as a result of its publication. *Communistes* has a limited field and the majority of the branches have been unable to participate in its distribution. However, it is possible that they can help in its circulation in Greek localities. *Young Spartacus* likewise does not enjoy the circulation it could have. A great deal of this is due to the failure of the branches to give it the necessary attention. But there are good possibilities for a further extension of its circulation in connection with the development of our youth work. On the whole it is necessary to begin a concerted and uniform drive nationally for our press; perhaps initiate a drive for the period of one month to build up all of our publications.

One thing noticeable during the tour was the absence of any special internal or external campaigns. I held meetings with the branch executive committees in Boston, Toronto, Chicago, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and Youngstown. I reported on the tasks of the branches, taking up with them concrete activities, especially stressing the need of developing our press activities. We must strive to narrow the gap between our growing influence and our organizational strength. There is still too great a disparity between them. It is clear that from the center it will be necessary to strengthen

the administrative and directive functions. The leadership from the national office must be multiplied many times through constant communications, direction, and aid to the comrades in Canada and the United States.

Boston: The branch is composed of five comrades. Two of the comrades are extremely active in the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. Almost all of their activity is confined there. They play a leading role in spite of the efforts of the Party bureaucrats to isolate and sidetrack them. The two comrades enjoy a good following among the workers because of the soundness of their position in their union activity. Our press is sold in the union and the comrades are able to make our position known to these workers. One other comrade is a shoe worker and also active in her union. Because of this, the actual branch work and the daily activity of building the League suffers. It would be well if a comrade could be sent to Boston who would spend his time in carrying out the daily tasks of the Opposition in building up a stronger unit and organizing the general activities of the left. I have in mind comrade Clarke, who would be able to aid the Boston comrades and accomplish there, where the base is present, that which he is unable to do in Kansas City.

My meeting in Boston was a good one. Forty-five were present in spite of the efforts of the Party to prevent a successful meeting by calling a "mass banquet" across the street from our meeting. This naturally acted as a barrier to many sympathizers who might possibly attend our meeting. The sales of our press are fair. *Unser Kampf*, because of the contacts of the comrades, sells better than the *Militant*. The sending of a comrade to Boston who is willing to go there and carry out the daily tasks would make possible an expansion of our activity in all directions and provide a better balance in the work.

Montreal: Here we have one comrade who carries the brunt of the work in representing the Left Opposition. Comrade Geretsky acts as the literature agent for all our publications and is virtually the only active comrade for the Opposition in Montreal. He arranged for the meeting at which over 30 were present, half of them members of the Party and Young Communist League. The Party and the league members participated in the discussion, which helped to bring about a better clarification of our views. It should be added

that the campaign of the Canadian government to legalize the revolutionary movement, while thus far being concentrated in the Ontario province, is spreading to the other provinces.¹⁷² This prevented the possibility of a public meeting and forced the comrade to organize it semilegally. Our literature, especially *Unser Kampf*, sells well. I do not hold the possibility of the organization of a branch of the Left Opposition to be an immediate one. Our comrade will need help, for example, of the Toronto branch. Alone, in my opinion, he lacks the necessary experience to do this. But we can be assured of a representative of the Left Opposition functioning actively in Montreal, a comrade who thus far continues to enjoy access to Party circles and who is an active member of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union.

Toronto: My arrival coincided with the sentencing of the leadership of the Party to jail terms and the illegalization of the movement. There is an extreme terror against the working class and its organizations; the chances for legal activity are few. Our meeting, organized illegally, nevertheless managed to get an attendance of over 50. In my opinion this was an excellent showing, considering the circumstances under which it was held. However, the drive against the Party and the revolutionary movement in general is a big blow to the working class. It did serve to draw our movement closer to the Party. The illegalization of the Party made possible the active participation of the Toronto branch in its defense and in the defense of the Party leaders. The willingness of the comrades to aid the Party brought good results. It went a long way in dispelling false notions of Party members and sympathizers regarding the Left Opposition and helped to an extent to break down the antagonisms between Party members and sympathizers regarding the Left Opposition and our comrades. The presence of comrade Spector at the trial of the Party leaders, an act which signified his solidarity with them and also endangered himself, plus the participation of the branch in the defense work, made possible a better relationship. For the first time since our expulsion, it was possible for our comrades to speak to Party members and to an extent fraternize with them. It will be necessary now for the branch to organize its activities with the view of breaking through and functioning under the new underground conditions.

The branch, however, showed a number of weaknesses. There are at present between 12 and 15 members in the branch. The branch as a whole is not active. They were virtually driven into participation in the defense of the Party as a unit by comrade Spector. The failure of a unified activity dates back to the postconference period. The branch rejected the political theses of the conference as well as its decisions. This created a condition where the possibilities of common work between them and comrade Spector was impossible. They are overcoming this difficulty slowly. Our literature sales, in consideration of the possibilities, are weak. The *Militant* could be pushed much harder. *Unser Kampf*, however, is making good progress. But the youth paper is given little attention. Generally a real expansion of work is possible here. Their activity in the defense has brought good results. They should proceed now with the organization of a youth club and a Jewish club. They must increase their activities many times. For Toronto especially, closer direction from the center is needed.

Buffalo: The Proletarian Party Opposition organized our meeting. Over 50 were present.³³³ The meeting was excellent. But, since we have no Opposition branch in this city and no bonafide sympathizer or member, further oppositional activity is questionable. The Proletarian Opposition members are still a dubious group. It is my opinion that we can expect little from this quarter.

Chicago: The best meeting of the tour (including New York) was held here. There were over 150 present at the meeting, which was marked by its enthusiasm. A banquet was also held at which 35 were present. At a meeting of the executive and the leading comrades of the branch, the discussion following my report disclosed good possibilities for the further extension of work. Chicago is the only city where we have contacts in the Party. The expulsion of the three Young Communist League members, who are now members of the Left Opposition, found the Party carrying out a strong campaign against us. Instructions were sent to all Party units to the effect that any Party member found at my meeting would face expulsion. These and other means were employed to prevent a successful meeting. The branch is now working on the organization of its Party fractional activities and the organization generally enjoys good prospects for development. The internal situation is not good. A number of old comrades have either

absented themselves from the branch for some time or else do not participate in its activities. In addition the terrific effect of the crisis has deep reflections in our movement. A number of our comrades are going through a deep poverty that naturally reflects upon their activity. Literature sales are far below its possibilities. The same can be said for *Unser Kampf*, far below its possibilities. The same can be said for *Young Spartacus*. The possibilities are present for building a youth club and a Jewish club and steps are being taken for it already. One of the best aspects of the Chicago branch is the fact that it has its own headquarters. This enables it to create a center for our movement in Chicago. There is room for further expansion, but basically the organization is a solid one with perhaps the best prospects of any unit of the League.

While in Chicago, efforts were made to obtain admission to sit in the conference of the Proletarian Party Opposition as fraternal delegates, if this were possible, or as observers. As a last resort, we applied for admission to address this body and comrade Oehler and myself presented our credentials and personally made the request. All of them were rejected. In discussing this question, I have the following opinions: It may be possible for us to win individual supporters to us in the course of our fight. But we can in no way maintain optimism for this group, in consideration of their past ten years of sectarian policy and their present national outlook. It appears that years of life in the political atmosphere are not so easily cast aside and these elements represent, in the panorama of the revolutionary movement in this country, not an altogether progressive element. We should seek to win whatever workers are in this movement—but we cannot expect to either win or change the political physiognomy of this group. This was particularly observed in their refusal to allow us to be present in the conference under any conditions or any circumstances.

Springfield: I managed to spend a few hours with comrade Angelo and discussed the situation and the possibilities of the organization of a branch. This appears remote for the present. The miners who came to our support are for the most part inactive either in the Party or the miners' movement. Comrade Angelo was active for a period of months in the Unemployed Council, which he helped the Party to organize. He was chairman of the council and also a member of its executive committee. During the time he was

active in this movement he played the leading role in activating the movement. The decline of the unemployed movement dates to the time of the expulsion of Angelo from this movement by the Party. He distributes all the copies of the *Militant* sent, as well as other literature, and continues his agitation for our movement. At the present moment he is working and agitating among a few young workers with the aim of drawing them closer to our movement. For the present Springfield must be considered a question mark.

West Frankfort: The scheduled meeting was not held for the reason that comrade Allard was away at a scale commission meeting and could not carry through the preparations for it. Added to this is the extreme terrorism that prevailed in this territory against the Party and the miners. Our meeting came on top of the arrest and trial of the Party organizers and the organizers of the National Miners Union, plus a drive taking place against the foreign-born miners with the aim of deportations.³³⁴ We discussed the questions of the Opposition with a few individual miners. Comrade Allard thinks it is possible for him to arrange a study circle of perhaps five young miners and through this bring about an organization of the Left Opposition. I advised him that this procedure was a good one and that he should proceed with it. It will be necessary to send comrade Allard both instruction and advice from the center.

The situation in this coal area is extremely complicated. There is a wide movement of insurgency against the Lewis machine and also the Walker state machine. The movement is hampered by the total lack of leadership in the mine struggles and the lack of perspective. At the time I was there, there was talk of strike upon the expiration of the agreement. The rank and file want to struggle. But it is clear that a struggle confined to the "little Egypt" territory in Illinois will be doomed to disaster. My advice to comrade Allard was to propagate for a united-front fight. Whether this is possible is extremely dubious. The Party is bent on carrying on a lone fight with the result that it isolates itself and commands no following. The whole situation is full of explosives.

St. Louis: I arrived on the evening of the meeting. By far the best public meeting that St. Louis has ever had. Over 100 were present. A few Party members and some sympathizers were also there.

Following the meeting we held a session with the branch members. I reported on the various phases of work, stressing, of course, the need of bolstering up our press work. There are especially good prospects for our Jewish work and *Unser Kampf*. The effects of the crisis in St. Louis had had disastrous effects upon our comrades. All of them are unemployed and suffering severe poverty and misery. But in spite of their personal conditions they are making good efforts to push the work. At present they are the only Communist force that carries out public activity and which fights for Communism in St. Louis. Their forum is attracting a good attendance, they make a good distribution of our press, and are now working on the creation of a youth club and a Jewish club. Comrade Goldberg is at present a member of a Workmen's Circle branch in which he is carrying on good work for our movement.³⁸⁵ He hopes that we may be able to reap good results soon. There are good prospects in this city for the revolutionary movement and our comrades are doing all they can under the most adverse conditions imaginable. The membership of this branch is six.

Kansas City: There is no branch in Kansas City. In addition to comrades Buehler and Kassan, comrade Clarke is working there as a colonizer. The two Kansas City comrades do very little for the Opposition and that is the main reason why we have no movement there. Thus far, while comrade Clarke has been able to do some good work externally, we were not able to make any organizational gains. His forum meetings were well attended and his activity in the Unemployed Councils resulted in political gains for the Opposition. My meeting was organized under bad conditions. The comrades were unable to obtain a public hall and had to make use of a private house of a Negro comrade. In addition, the leaflet advertising the meeting contained the wrong address. We managed nevertheless to have an attendance of 45, which under other circumstances would have easily been doubled. Our literature is pushed slowly for the reason that its sales are not organized—what is sold is mainly disposed of through comrade Buehler's bookstore. We must bear in mind that comrade Clarke will not be able to remain in Kansas City indefinitely. He lives and works under abnormal conditions and will be forced to leave Kansas City soon. Comrade Clarke is able to organize a study class of several workers, but has failed to do this because he fears that the moment

this is organized he will be forced to leave. My advice to him was to organize the class under any circumstances and then turn it over to the comrades who are there, should he have to leave. It is my opinion that the National Committee should inform Clarke that in the event he must leave Kansas City, he return to New York, stopping over in Cleveland for a few days or perhaps a few weeks, if this can be arranged, and that then preparations and arrangements be made to send him to Boston where he would be able to do a great deal more than in Kansas City, in spite of his efforts.

Minneapolis: I was able to spend three days in Minneapolis, during which six meetings were arranged, including a banquet. On the first day, the banquet was held, with an attendance of 45. On the second day, I spoke on Germany at the regular afternoon forum, and in the evening in the discussion on the crisis with A.C. Townley.³³⁶ The forum had an attendance of 75 and the evening meeting of 150. The forum brought out a heated discussion between ourselves and Walter Frank, left-wing leader in the Minneapolis trade-union movement. Contrary to what was reported, Frank not only failed to show his sympathy for the Left Opposition, but made a vile and dastardly speech against it generally and against comrade Trotsky personally. We were able to dispose of him easily, but it proved that he has maintained close relations with the Party during all this time. This is borne out by the fact that he is to head the Minneapolis delegation to the Soviet Union. The evening discussion resulted in good gains for the Opposition. We were able to present a correct Communist position against the reformist position of Townley. This was understood by all. On the last day, a public meeting was held in Burton Hall of the University of Minnesota, attended by over 100 students, where the viewpoint of the Left Opposition was presented. All of these meetings were handicapped by the severe storms raging and the subzero weather that prevailed during the whole period of my stay. In addition to these meetings, a gathering of youth was held on the afternoon of the first day, where the question of the organization of a youth club was taken up and plans made accordingly. In the evening of the last day, a branch meeting was held where I reported on the international situation and also on the tasks of the branch in the immediate future.

It appears that for some time prior to my arrival in Minneapolis, the older comrades had not been playing the role that falls

upon their shoulders; instead, the burden of the work fell to the younger comrades and to an extent upon new comrades. Both comrades Dunne and Skoglund are working at present on a job that allows little time for activity. In addition, neither of the two comrades are well physically. These are circumstances that must be taken into account. But in spite of that, better efforts could have been made by them to help in the direction of the work, if not in its actual execution. I had occasion to speak to comrade Dunne once, the only time that I saw him, and likewise with comrade Skoglund, and impressed upon them the need for giving more direction to the work. I believe that we should have little difficulty on that score. The branch as a whole is working along as usual, with steady persistent activity under the direction of comrade Cowl and the executive committee. They push the press very well, and make good use of the opportunities present. At the time I was present, comrades Dunne and Skoglund were organizing a movement of the coal drivers. I call attention to this fact in the report because the National Committee has not yet received a report on the matter, and the Minneapolis branch discussed it for the first time when I was present. What is the situation? Comrades Skoglund and Dunne went ahead with the organization of a grievance committee in the coal yards made up of the truck drivers. They managed to form a committee and held meetings of these drivers, as well as making application to the union for admission. In the course of this work a number of acts were committed that do not speak well for our movement, nor the comrades initiating the work. First of all it must be borne in mind that the drivers own the trucks delivering the coal and hire themselves out to the coal dealers. The helpers are in reality the more exploited of the yard workers. Yet apparently they are not part of the movement, nor were real efforts made to draw them into it. The group of drivers organized a stag party to celebrate their organization, an affair that was attended by the bosses. One of them spoke at the affair. Comrade Brinda, who was present and tried to sell tickets for the Townley debate, was refused the floor by the chairman. Helpers were present at this gathering mainly because the bosses gave them tickets to come, having bought these tickets in blocks of ten from the comrades and those selling them. The argument made for the sale of tickets to the bosses was on the grounds that money was needed. Their presence and speaking at the affair was

explained away as unavoidable. Comrade Skoglund, in answer to my question as to perspective, replied that he thought the movement would disappear with the close of the coal season. Nevertheless, the character of the organization, its exclusion of the helpers, and what cannot be otherwise termed as a fraternization with the bosses, stamps this movement and its activity as a gross error against which the National Committee must make answer.

Generally we can count on the Minneapolis branch as one of our mainstays. It is easily one of our best branches and is also one of our most active units.

Cleveland: I arrived here shortly after the branch was organized. The branch has a membership of seven. The comrades arranged a meeting hurriedly without public advertising. We managed in spite of that to have an attendance of 65, including Party members and sympathizers, as well as a number of members of the Unemployed Councils. A good discussion was held. The prospects in Cleveland are good, though it is yet too early to say definitely just what the branch is able to do. The comrades also arranged a banquet for the second night. I stayed for this upon the information that no meeting was arranged for Youngstown. There were 20 present at the banquet. *Unser Kampf* is selling well there and before leaving the comrades agreed to proceed with the organization of a Jewish club. We should be able to count on good developments from Cleveland.

Youngstown: Because of the banquet in Cleveland and the information that no meeting had been arranged, I arrived here on the day following my schedule. I learned then that it was possible for us to have a meeting. I met with the comrades (there are three of them) and discussed the possibilities for work and expansion of the organization. Following this discussion I proposed that the comrades immediately initiate a class in fundamentals, around which they would be able to draw in others and begin to spread and expand their literature sales. They plan holding open-air meetings in the summer—in the event that such arrangements could be made. It is hardly likely that this group will grow fast or win many new supporters. Its tasks consist of beginning from the bottom and building up the Left Opposition in this highly industrial city.

Pittsburgh: A meeting of six was held here. The meeting took place

in comrade Sifakis' home. We can count only upon comrade Sifakis, who is an extremely active comrade and works hard for our movement. Comrade Basin will help in the work. He is a close sympathizer and expressed willingness to do something for our movement—particularly in the Jewish field. There too we can expect only small achievement and slow developments. But we do have a comrade here whom we can count upon as a real fighter and worker for our cause and who in a decisive moment will prove his worth.



Cannon and Swabeck Have Rightist Tendencies

Letter by John Edwards to Max Shachtman³³⁷

16 April 1932

I have received your letter and resolution. I had already read a copy of your resolution together with the long document of Cannon and Swabeck, and after reading them, I must say I had a feeling of disgust.

At the Fifth Congress of the CI, which I was fortunate enough to attend, I heard a report made by the old Bolshevik professor who had just returned from a study of the archives of the Second International. I saw photostatic copies of Engels' original document and also his letters to Bernstein and I thought this had ended this discussion once and for all. But I see it is being put forth again not as a question of clarity but for some other purpose.

I also read Carter's article and the reply by Swabeck. I agreed theoretically with the reply of Swabeck and still do. However, I do not agree with the method of presentation. On the other hand, I had the privilege of meeting Carter and will state right here and now that I was not favorably impressed with him, although he has a fair scholastic knowledge of Marx. I might state to you that all his time here he spent with the opposition forces to the League, one political and moral degenerate by the name of Tom

O'Flaherty. I also want to inform you that he is in communication with Tom, telling him what is going on in the League, and Tom is peddling this to the Stalinites for revenge against the central committee of the League. I want to say further that Carter kept away from both Oehler and myself all the time he was here. He does not seem to be at home among proletarian revolutionists. He is suffering under what we would say in good American slang, a swell head. I have no sympathy for him nor his ego.

Now I would like to direct some questions to you. First of all, how is it that a young revolutionist like you can see fit to take a stand on the French Ligue opposite to comrade Trotsky? I have just seen the late bulletin, the first real information I have had on the question. The attitude of Felix and Mill is absolutely reactionary and it will not take long in the future to prove it to be so. I do not know whether you have any sympathy for these two individuals or not, but if you do, I must say at the outset that I cannot sympathize with you. I read the resolutions presented by Swabeck, Glotzer, and Abern. I cannot imagine what is behind Abern's and Glotzer's resolutions.

Another question, Max—how the hell is it that you went to Europe when you knew it would be used against you? Just what was your purpose? Was it to get support from the secretariat for yourself? People do not spend hundreds of dollars on vacations without there being some political purpose. Apparently you did not go there to strengthen the hand of Trotsky.

Now perhaps after reading this, you will think that I am totally out of sympathy with you. Such is not the case, however, I think it is absolutely necessary for you to be in the leadership of the League. I think that you, Abern, and Glotzer have greater potentialities as future leaders than either Swabeck or Cannon. I know that both of them have rightist tendencies.

The labor party and the Negro question, as discussed at our First National Conference, were not mere incidents.³³⁸ It is hard for the old to change their opinions, but there is a chance for the young. You backed them up on these two questions 100 percent at the time, but I figured you had a chance to change your opinion. Max, I have formed my opinion years ago of Cannon, also of Swabeck. Cannon comes forward mainly in factional strife. Personally he is revengeful and subjective. I knew this years ago, but you did not. You and Marty followed him like a couple of blind

men. And when you found out his character, it has reacted upon you in a subjective way.

The problem of the future leadership of our League cannot be determined at the present time. I have always maintained that our main duty at the present is to propagandize our position; to get Trotsky's writings before as wide a mass in the U.S. as possible. Our group is only in its propagandist stage; numerically it is a little sect. A split in this organization at this time would play directly into the hands of the Stalinists and it could not occur at a worse time, due to the coming events in Germany. Anyone can see the Stalin apparatus in Russia is cracking. Just the one fact of their having to raise party salaries 300 percent to hold the bureaucracy intact is an indication of that. There is developing a wide gap between them and the mass of workers in Russia, and any split or factional struggle in our ranks at this time can only consolidate them and prolong their existence on top.

Now, my advice to you is the following: In order to defend yourself, you are making a series of political errors. And Cannon, the clever politician, is seizing these errors to use against you. Your alliance with Carter could only hurt you. The time is not opportune now for you to make a struggle. The tactic would be much better for you to postpone any immediate struggle in the group, if it is possible, even though it goes against the grain. The class struggle in the near future in America is going to be very sharp and it is my opinion that rightist errors will develop in the League. Then there would be a chance to really carry on a constructive political struggle, even if it did result in a small split; but now the opposite is the case. So be big enough as a revolutionist and political enough to bide your time.

In discussions with Al, I could see that the struggle so far in the committee has been almost purely subjective. I expected when Arne went to NY he would play a conciliatory role between you two, but Arne is naive in politics. I consider him a good revolutionist who is willing to sacrifice for the movement, but Arne's very nature keeps him from ever being a working-class politician.

However, I would like to have you inform me of events that take place and your views more thoroughly. I will keep such things purely confidential, but I wish to say now that I feel that the worker membership of our League should not definitely take sides at the

present, but should strive for unity of the committee, and if the central committee, through a factional struggle, jeopardizes the League, the membership should appeal to comrade Trotsky to assist them in putting the leadership in their places or removing them as leaders.

One thing the struggle so far has proven, looking at it objectively, is that it is a carryover from our lives and activities in the Party. In other words, we have not freed ourselves from the methods of the Stalin bureaucracy. Now another criticism I have to make of you. Why the hell did you pull out from the editorship of the *Militant*—allowing this also to be used against you, which on the surface looks as if you yourself are taking a purely subjective stand. Max, you are still a novice in political maneuvering. This is to your credit. This applies also to Al. He is still in his swaddling clothes. All one has to do is to read his resolutions.

Now, I think the tactic of the present is for you fellows to make a howl for unity. You will head Jim off. This is just what he will do. I think, on the other hand, this discussion must come forth, but it must be a preconvention discussion. We must, in other words, have a convention—the membership must be able to decide. Let us say it takes place this fall with a 60-day discussion period in which the two groups can tear the hides clear off one another. In this manner the membership would understand something of the men that it has chosen for its leaders and would be able to select for the immediate future a national committee.

Well, I will bring this long letter to a close, Max, and hope that you will see this thing in the correct light. Then give me a good answer right away, and make it just as damn critical as you wish. I have a tough skin.

You may show this letter to Al and Marty. Otherwise it should be kept strictly confidential.

PS: Since writing this, have read the last minutes of the NC. I see that you speak of split. You had better forget this. You don't want to become another Weisbord, do you? Under no consideration should a split take place. After the convention the membership should decide. I think that outside of the few intellectuals in New York, the membership will take a strong stand against any form of split. Don't forget they are assimilating the ideas of the Old Man and that they would accept his decisions 100 percent.

The Organizational Status of the CLA

by Arne Swabeck³³⁹

18 April 1932

Submitted to the resident committee on April 11, Glotzer's tour report engendered strong objections from Swabeck and Cannon. This reply was appended to the resident committee minutes of April 18.

The report of comrade Glotzer on his national tour, submitted 11 April 1932, is obviously not so much a report as an attempt to show that the Left Opposition in America is stagnating and actually at its lowest point of organizational decline. In fact it did say in so many words: "The League is smaller today than at any other time in its history." (That sentence was eliminated only after being seriously challenged at the National Committee meeting on the basis of actual membership figures.) Has such a presentation anything to do with objective reality? None whatever.

What is the purpose behind this attempt? That can become clear only when viewed in connection with the accusations against comrades Cannon and Swabeck, contained in the document submitted by comrade Shachtman at the National Committee meeting of 15 March 1932, which was supported also by comrades Glotzer and Abern. This report by comrade Glotzer, fully supported by comrade Shachtman in statements made by him at the April 11 meeting, by giving a false picture of the developments of the League, aims to furnish a basis in organization questions for the accusations contained in the Shachtman document.

At the outset this gives one the impression that the attitude which characterizes these comrades is not one of responsible collaborators in the leadership of the League. It is rather one which could be assumed by abstentionists who, from a leisure position, criticize comrades who carry the main burden of responsible functions. In looking back we find we do not miss the point very much as far as the maker of the report is concerned. During the period of over a year prior to his departure for Europe, the function of comrade Glotzer as a collaborator in the leadership as well as a

member of the League was largely limited to perfunctory attendance at committee meetings. Perhaps this gives him special qualifications to judge the developments in the organization during that extended time.

While the report attempts to convey the impression of stagnation and of a low ebb in the League, at the same time it takes cognizance of the fact that the meetings held on the tour were above expectations. It says: "There is a general growth of sympathy for our movement and it is possible to say that we are slowly breaking through the crust of isolation from the Communist and revolutionary workers." This is true. The report mentions our new and additional publications, *Unser Kampf*, *Young Spartacus*, and *Communists*. It mentions formation of youth clubs and Jewish workers clubs, or steps taken in that direction. What are these? Are they manifestations of stagnation and decline, or have they accidentally fallen from heaven? On the contrary, these factors are manifestations of slow but persistent growth and of a fairly healthy organizational and political life of the League.

In order to throw light on the organizational and political life in the League I present the following actual and concrete facts. The end of 1930 represented the end of the lowest ebb of our organization. Retrenchment had cut down everything to the very bone. Abstentionism from active function had become a habit among leading comrades. The whole of the functioning center was practically reduced to two comrades, Cannon and Shachtman, functioning with the comrades who had been co-opted from the New York branch. Comrade Swabeck was then only preparing to come to New York. This could hardly be considered a center able to keep in intimate touch with the units and give them the necessary direction. Hence the branches existing were merely going along primarily on their own momentum. The entire membership numbered only very slightly above 100 (only approximate figures are available). Where formerly some semblance of a branch existed, for example, in Boston, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, they were out of existence. The *Militant*, from a weekly, had become a semi-monthly and more often a mere monthly publication. That marked the end of the greatest slump for our League. This depression in the organization escaped the attention of comrade Glotzer and makes his present observation ridiculous.

The beginning of the year 1931 marks the beginning of our

serious efforts to pull the League out of its depressed conditions. The very first step became the strengthening of the center, the establishment of a functioning, though yet limited National Committee, limited by abstentionism then still prevailing. Other organizational steps followed in consecutive succession. The defunct branches in Boston, Philadelphia, and St. Louis were reorganized. At our Second National Conference we could record a membership of 155. Since then the new branches of Cleveland, Youngstown, and Newark have been added and most of the other branches have been strengthened, so that we today have an actual membership of 175. While several of our branches still remain numerically small and some of our members still function as lone Left Oppositionists in one city, we can, however, with the general growth of organization also record a corresponding growth of sympathizing workers keeping in close organic contact with us.

This is only the purely organizational side of the question. Politically we were able also in a growing measure to formulate our views upon strategic and tactical questions and in that sense to intervene more actively in issues of the class struggle, in the unemployment situation, in the workers movement and its problems, by propaganda, through publicity and meetings. It coincided with a corresponding elevation of the political life of our branches. We began our Expansion Program: we established the Pioneer Publishers and added to the two pamphlets formerly published a whole series of new pamphlets and books from the Left Opposition arsenal. The *Militant* again became a weekly publication in July and has since maintained itself, although with great difficulties.

A comparison of the *Militant* circulation of the first three months of 1931, the very beginning of our upward curve, and the first three months of 1932 will further substantiate all that has been said above. The comparison shows the following figures.

Remittances to the national office:

1931 (semimonthly)	Subscriptions	Bundle Orders	Totals
January	\$ 5.50	\$32.47	\$37.97
February	16.40	16.38	32.78
March	48.75	46.73	95.48
1932 (weekly publication)			
January	67.75	65.46	133.21
February	30.50	87.25	117.75
March	59.22	61.70	120.92

After the weekly *Militant* came the appearance of *Young Spartacus*, of *Communistes*, and now the latest addition to our press, that of *Unser Kampf*. We were able, even under the adverse conditions of the economic crisis, to hold our Second National Conference. We have succeeded in completing two national tours conducted by comrade Swabeck and comrade Glotzer, each bringing gratifying results. While, all in all, these are only modest achievements slowly accomplished, they nevertheless record a period not of stagnation and decline, but a period of growth.

It should be remembered that this expansion was carried on under the extremely difficult conditions of a growing and deepening economic crisis, which in many respects served to impose financial restrictions upon our activities. And this crisis has not yet to any measurable extent produced the otherwise compensating feature of a growing class movement of the American workers. The Communist Party is yet at a very low ebb, and it must be admitted that these conditions react with double force upon the Left Opposition. They particularly account for the fact that our direct and intimate contacts with the Party and with the Party membership still are meager and have been so ever since our inception, excluding the very early period prior to the "left" turn of the Party when the question was new.

Comrade Glotzer's reports speak of organizational weaknesses still obtaining in the League. Only fools would fail to acknowledge that there are such. He speaks of a gap between our growing influence and our organizational strength. This is true. But that such is the case is largely due to the fact that the general situation still imposes upon us the limitations of a revolutionary opposition functioning mainly as a propaganda organization, with all the barriers erected by the Party bureaucracy. Our general course is in the direction of narrowing that gap. The report says: "The leadership from the national office must be multiplied many times through constant communications, direction, and aid to the comrades in Canada and in the United States." This is also true. But it is true only when accompanied by a recognition that the whole trend of development has been definitely in that direction. Furthermore, it should first of all presuppose that all leading comrades who make criticism from the sidelines fully assume the responsibilities and duties of revolutionists, of Left Oppositionists.

One additional remark regarding the strictures on the inactivity of the Minneapolis comrades. Our general observation, since the inception of the Left Opposition in America, has been that these comrades have been in the forefront of the activities and sacrifices and have by no means shirked their responsibilities. This fact, which is well-known and clearly established, leads one to question the objectivity of this phase of comrade Glotzer's report also and to ask what purpose motivates it. No doubt the Minneapolis comrades will speak for themselves on this matter.



The Coal Drivers in Minneapolis

Letter by Carl Skoglund to the National Committee³⁴⁰

18 April 1932

This reply to Glotzer's tour report was appended to the resident committee minutes of 25 April 1932.

As per your request I herewith submit the following report in regard to the coal drivers' situation in Minneapolis.

I regret very much that this question has been brought up in this manner and elevated into a national issue in the League. I hope that the following report will be considered without being connected with other controversies in the committee. I do not say this in the sense of evading mistakes if such were committed. First and foremost, in judging a question of this character we must not have preconceived notions and act according to them when dealing with American workers.

The coal drivers had many grievances among them, such as decent quarters to eat and help loading the trucks. We utilized these questions for calling meetings of drivers with the idea of laying the basis for organizing these workers into unions. Knowing as we do the leadership of the local trade-union movement, our plan was to organize these workers under our leadership and to apply in a body for membership. As was explained in a League meeting in comrade Glotzer's presence, the delivering of coal is a seasonal work and any attempt at the end of the season to organ-

ize will be hard at the best of circumstances. To say that we did not want to bring in the helpers who are the most exploited: What is meant by this statement—the workers that work by the hour or men that work with the drivers on the trucks? The last named get 25 percent of the gross earnings of the trucks, while the drivers get 75 percent and have to furnish the truck oil and gasoline. At every one of our meetings these workers were present and participated in the deliberations and deciding of all questions. We wanted more men to be employed steady in the yard. This was as much the interest of the hourly men as of the drivers. About 20 or 25 workers come around every morning looking for an opportunity to work. The boss put one worker to work for possibly an hour and then he was laid off to again wait in line for another hour's work. We, the drivers who occupy the most powerful position, decided to change this condition and demand that these workers be employed more steadily and also that the drivers refuse to load their trucks without more help. In the meeting that was held between workers and the bosses, these questions were brought up and an agreement was reached. More men are to be employed. At no time were the bosses invited to our meeting, except that we sold them tickets to a stag party arranged by the drivers. This affair was arranged to bring not only drivers from one company, but from practically all of them, for contact for future work. The program at the stag consisted of amusement exclusively. Comrade Miles Dunne, in a satirical reading that he made up for that occasion, pictured the conditions of the workers. The bosses that were present demanded the floor to speak to counteract what had been said. The chairman of this gathering was a typical American worker who had been put in this position to draw him closer to our movement. He did not know whether it was wrong or right for bosses to be allowed the floor to speak.

If John Brinda under the conditions existing had been mechanically forced on the platform to advertise our Glotzer meeting, most of the workers would have been unable to understand, and it also would have meant discharge of some of our comrades. To prove that we are not, in our relations with these workers, hiding the fact that we are Communists, I want to point to the fact that about ten of these workers have subscribed to the *Militant* and others might in the near future.

Right now there are hardly any drivers left. They have gone

to other work. No more talk about organizing these workers until next fall. What work was done this year will then be borne in mind by these workers, thereby making it easier to talk organization next year.

* * * * *

We members of the National Committee here have discussed the holding of a plenum in May. It will be a very big burden on our movement here because of economic conditions. We propose that the Chicago branch be responsible for \$25 and that we furnish the transportation for comrade Oehler for this amount. With this arrangement we will do our best to attend a plenum in the middle or later part of May.

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Personal Combinations vs. Revolutionary Politics

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer³⁴¹

1 May 1932

Unfortunately, it has still not been possible for me to study in detail the documents I was sent on the American dispute. In any case I will catch up on this in the next few weeks. However, I would like to first make one observation: The programmatic, tactical documents are of course of great importance, but in my eyes actions, tested by the facts, are much more important. Comrade Shachtman's behavior is extremely disturbing to me, and I cannot easily separate the American struggle from the international questions.

While everywhere supporting those tendencies I consider wrong and harmful, comrade Shachtman thinks he can pacify me with clichés. For two years he supports Naville and Landau quite decidedly and stubbornly, although not openly as befits a revolutionary in political questions. In his last letter he contests that he supported Naville and Landau, which makes the most embarrassing

impression. Simultaneously, he remains completely silent about his attitude toward the German Opposition and the French Ligue, just as he remains silent about his alliance with Mill, Felix, and Lacroix. As far as I know, the unbelievable letters of comrade Lacroix, who, not for the first time, invokes comrade Shachtman, are known to comrade Shachtman. But he is silent about them. What is more, people wrote me (this is in any case the only fact I have secondhand; the rest I know from personal experience) that comrade Nin declared that I contrived a campaign against Shachtman. But I wrote about Shachtman's behavior only to Shachtman himself, and then to the National Committee of the American League. Who could have reported this completely false information to Nin? If comrade Shachtman applies the same methods in American affairs, some of his theses may be good, but his politics are bad. The Brandlerites maintain that Stalin errs only on international questions but that he is right on the Russian ones. I refuse to apply this double bookkeeping to Shachtman. For over two years I contented myself with persuasion and personal letters. Then I turned to the leadership of the American League to force Shachtman to show his colors. He always prefers to hide and to substitute questionable personal combinations for revolutionary politics. Thus I must tell myself that, against my best intentions, an open fight with Shachtman and his international allies is becoming unavoidable.

Comrade Shachtman writes me that a phrase in my interview about the inevitability of a labor party in America has created confusion. I have already noticed that in the Lovestone paper. This is a striking misunderstanding. I spoke about the inevitable Europeanization of American politics, i.e., primarily about the crystallization of a party of the working class. It goes without saying that in doing so I did not concretize the conception of this party at all: whether it would be a labor party, a social-democratic party, or a Communist party. Of course there was no reason for me to go into this in an interview with a capitalist newspaper. The Russian text of my statement reads "workers party" and not "labor party." Every attentive reader should be able to understand this. That the American Brandlerites want to capitalize on this only proves that they, like their German mentors, are on their last legs.

You Must Take Us Into Your Confidence

Letter by Maurice Spector to Max Shachtman³⁴²

10 May 1932

Spector makes clear here that his support for Shachtman in the internal dispute was wholly independent of Shachtman's position on international political questions. Cannon was at the time ignorant of Spector's position, as he reported in a 30 April 1932 letter to Oehler. Spector's letter confirms Cannon's judgment of the Shachtman forces:

*We, and those comrades who support us, are a unit on all the important questions, both with regard to internal and external policy. The others are united completely on only one point, and that has nothing to do with communist politics: a common antagonism to us.*³⁴³

Cannon was grappling at the time with putting the CLA's factional divide in the context of other disputes within the ILO, as is evident in an unfinished letter to Bernard Morgenstern:

*As we see the situation, the American League is now beginning to manifest some of those internal contradictions which have disrupted the internal life of the European sections for the past few years. You know it has become a legend with us that the issues and struggles in the European communist movement have always repeated themselves on American soil—two or three years later. This, in a way, is the measure of our backwardness. I once wrote on this theme in the Militant and expressed the idea that, profiting by the experience of the European sections of the Opposition, we would skip over the crises that beset them. This expectation also proved too optimistic. At bottom the present conflict in our League signifies the American reproduction—it is to be hoped in a moderated form—of the internal crisis of the International Left.*³⁴⁴

You will forgive this Überschuss [plethora] of correspondence. I want to supplement my last postscriptum. In a word or two, I repeat my perhaps now monotonous refrain that you should think through all the implications of the coming struggle at the plenum clearly. Divided, we may go “boop-adoop-adoop.” You must take us—Abern, Glotzer, and myself—into your complete confidence. If you fear betrayal—by no means an impossibility, the etiquette of the Comintern being what it is today, and its influence extending

to the cadres of the Opposition itself—safeguard yourself by formulations that can stand the cold light of publicity—but mutual confidence is indispensable. You have indicated that it is very difficult to explain by mail all your views on the European question. But I expect a requisite minimum of this political intelligence, if I am to be prepared and to formulate my own thoughts. On you devolves the greatest responsibility, resulting from your work at the center, your European observations, and exchanges with LD. In saying this I do not seek to flatter you—I have no interest in that. But in view of the present relation of forces and the geographical distribution of the National Committee, having regard also to the point (with which Marty would fully agree) that of the members of the former Cannon grouping, you have indubitably evidenced the greatest political development in the past three years. A triumph for Cannon, masquerading in the borrowed plumes of LD's criticism of the Naville-Mill, groupe-juif [Jewish Group] tendency, would be a lamentable retrogression of a movement that would have faded out completely if he had got his way. In my view, you should discuss every step of the next stage with colleagues you must assume the risk of trusting, and if there is a failure to reach a common agreement, who will be entitled to be deemed as having arrived at their final conclusions objectively. I take the liberty of writing in this strain because I feel you will not misunderstand my motives. They are exactly what they purport to be on the surface. Also dabei ein wenig Kritik üben [thus to exercise a bit of criticism in this] for the sake of the future. I do not accept facts from C's resolutions. But I know that not only C for his own peculiar reasons, but Abern and Glotzer and—my own self—would have appreciated greater information of what was going on in your mind, and what was going on between yourself and LD and the European leaders. In the end, it is made to appear by C-Sw that you have acted like an individualist and secretly “concealed information.” I am aware that your retort is “personal correspondence”—but surely there must have been more than the personal. Abern, whom I esteem as a most loyal colleague, should have been kept in touch step by step, instead of being caught off his guard, more or less having to write resolutions on accomplished facts. Now, if you are one of those who like the pleasure of the tu quoque [you too] argument (which I doubt) you can find more than enough to criticize in the Toronto member of the NC. But

that is neither here nor there. There is no occasion to think for a moment of what I have suggested in the *Et tu Brute!* spirit. Nor will you.

I cannot understand the failure of Swabeck to receive Mac's statement.³⁴⁵ It was return-addressed too—unless somebody is intercepting mail at the office.



On Weisbord and International Questions

Letter by Leon Trotsky to the
CLA National Committee³⁴⁶

19 May 1932

A different translation of this letter was appended to the resident committee minutes of 25 June 1932. The last paragraph was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 2 (July 1932).

In a letter to comrade Glotzer I have already briefly clarified the amusing misunderstanding regarding the labor party in my *New York Times* interview. Comrade Glotzer has hopefully communicated the necessary points to you. I am enclosing a more detailed treatment of this question.³⁴⁷ The document came into being as follows: Comrade Weisbord, who came here on behalf of his group and, of course, at their initiative, and who has now been with us a number of days, laid out to us (besides Weisbord, three other foreign comrades are here) the views of his group on the labor party question. This naturally led to a discussion, and at the conclusion of this part of the discussion I dictated the enclosed lines to comrade Weisbord. In a literary sense they are highly unfinished, because Weisbord wrote down my ostensible English version almost word for word. If you want to print it you must provide the polish yourselves.

Further discussions with Weisbord are pending. I must admit that Weisbord makes a much more favorable impression on me in person than he does through his articles and letters. Naturally I refrain from taking any organizational position, i.e., I am pointing out to him that the American League is our only organization

in America and that the questions in dispute must be decided in America. As you will see from the enclosed document, I defend the leadership of the League against Weisbord's criticism quite energetically (of course, not for the sake of diplomacy, but out of conviction). It seems to me, however, that Weisbord's group would now be prepared to join the League if the conditions are not too "degrading." Don't you think that after my sharp rejection of the theoretical and tactical errors of this group, you could open a bridge to the League for Weisbord and his followers? That is only a suggestion. I am in no way intervening in your name, which would be impossible in any case, nor even in my own. I must say, however, that comrade Glotzer's report about the complete stagnation of the League's local groups has disturbed me. Perhaps something in Weisbord's criticism regarding "mass actions" is not as incorrect as the other parts of his criticism.

I am very glad that you have taken a firm position on the international questions. I am enclosing a letter from Gourov on the question of the international conference.³⁴⁸ You will understand why the author of this letter signs it as he does. This letter too is a rejection of the Weisbord group's fantastic idea of a conference at which not only the national sections but also all the splinter groups and refractory elements should be represented. You surely know that some Spanish comrades are flirting with this idea? In the Czechoslovakian group as well, which is rather new to our ranks, no clarity reigns yet in international questions. It is therefore all the more important to take a firm position in advance on the composition of the conference and to put a stop to any confusion and to all combinationist intrigues.

On the internal dispute in the American League I am not taking a position for the moment because I have not yet been able to study the issues with sufficient attention. In taking a position I will attempt not to be influenced in advance by the incorrect and harmful attitude of comrade Shachtman in all international questions almost without exception. On the other hand, it is not easy to assume that one is right on the most important national questions if one is always wrong on the most important international ones.

I Prefer Weisbord's Methods to Shachtman's

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer³⁴⁹

3 June 1932

*Glotzer wrote to Trotsky on May 17, insisting that while Shachtman did not support Landau, Naville, Mill, or Felix, "He does not have any confidence in the leadership of Molinier and Treint." Separating Shachtman's views on international questions from what he described as the ongoing struggle of himself, Spector, Abern, and Shachtman against Cannon and Swabeck in the American League, Glotzer wrote, "A word on Cannon's 'internationalism.' I wouldn't give a fig leaf for it. He is no more concerned about it than the man in the moon and what is more, knows even less about it."*³⁵⁰

Many thanks for the materials you sent. As to your last letter, I can only very much regret that you, on bad counsel, want to reduce the issues separating Shachtman from the most important European Oppositional organizations to the question of whether Molinier or Treint is to be regarded as a good leader. That is how the question is posed by Rosmer, Naville, and other philistines, for whom Marxism and the revolutionary organization are intolerable things, but who do not have the courage to defend their anarchist-like politics openly. To reduce two years of internal struggle to whether Molinier is fit to be a leader or not is really wretched and inexorably compromises those who hold such a view.

Weisbord spent several weeks at our house. We discussed a great deal. With complete candor and sharpness I told him my opinion of his group's views and actions. But the fight was about principled questions, and I must tell you in all candor in this personal letter that I prefer Weisbord's method to Shachtman's a hundred times over, because Shachtman toys with ideas and makes combinations, whereas Weisbord is very serious about things. Shachtman has never explained openly and seriously what he thinks, what he is fighting for and with whom. He gave the Jewish Group in Paris the right to invoke his authority, as he did with Lacroix and Nin. In so doing he helped them stray even further downhill, for they all thought the American League was behind

Shachtman. After two years of Shachtman's maneuvering, after dozens of admonishing letters from me and ever evasive, petty, diplomatizing letters that bordered on intrigues from him, I asked your leadership whether they supported Shachtman's international policy. In so doing I knew nothing of your internal differences. My question was meant exactly as it was written. Shachtman assured me of his solidarity in a cloying letter, and simultaneously he reported to Barcelona that I had begun an international campaign against him. In the meantime, without knowing anything about this, I wrote to Shachtman and the leadership of the American League that Shachtman should withdraw his resignation; his work at one of the leading posts was necessary, etc. I said to myself that perhaps my letter had given Shachtman the impetus to resign and immediately set out to counteract it. Where, then, is a campaign and, in particular, an international campaign against Shachtman? What does all of this have to do with the question of Molinier's qualities? It is a matter of Shachtman's "qualities," and after all that has transpired I unfortunately cannot trust them. I feel obligated to tell you this without prettifying it in the least, so that there shall be no illusions between us.



I Am Not an American Naville

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky³⁵¹

4 June 1932

The enclosed document, signed by three of the members of our National Committee, is a reply to the statement of comrades Cannon and Swabeck, both of which are to be considered by the plenum of the committee next week. You have already received their document, and ours will be of additional aid to you in orienting yourself on our internal disputes. From the document, as well as from a personal statement which I am preparing for our plenum, you will gather a clearer idea of how matters have stood with us in the past, in "domestic" disputes as well as on the internal struggles in the European Opposition.

Now on a matter which concerns not the group of comrades with whom I am associated, but myself.

I have not yet received a reply from you to the recent letters I sent. At the same time, it is clear from the letters you have sent comrade Glotzer and the recent letter (on the labor party) to the National Committee that your opinion about my position has not changed. In spite of this, I feel compelled once more to raise the question before you in an effort to reestablish the *Kampfge-meinschaft und Freundschaft* [collaboration in struggle and friendship] about which you wrote in an earlier letter.

In your recent letters you continue to speak about my conduct in Europe and my past or present support of Landau, Naville, Mill, or Lacroix. It would be much easier for me to deal with this question if I knew precisely to what *acts* or *words* during the past or right now you refer. I do not know of any, for the simple reason that *I do not support* any of the individuals or groups you mention. I know only of acts to the contrary.

1. In the United States: There is not a single document in existence, a single resolution, a single proposal, that can be pointed to, which would indicate that I gave the support to which you refer. On the contrary, I made the first motion in our committee to endorse the removal of Naville from the International Secretariat and his replacement by Frank. I made the first motion (both of them were adopted) to condemn Landau. I reported several times (to the National Committee, to the New York branch, to the Second National Conference) on the international situation of the Opposition, in which my opposition to the standpoint of Naville and Landau was quite clearly stated beyond the possibility of mistake. I reported to the committee and made the motion to repudiate the proposal of the Bordigists on the political liquidation of the secretariat. I reported to the committee and made the motion of disagreement with the standpoint of some Spanish comrades to join in a "unity convention" with Maurín, thus rejecting the analysis made of the Maurín group by Mill or Nin. Thus the "official" position. "Unofficially," it stands as follows: When I returned from my first trip to Europe, I wrote perhaps one or two letters of a general nature to Landau; but when the struggle broke out in the German Opposition, I broke off all correspondence with Landau demonstratively. Landau cannot show a single word from my pen to indicate that I had the slightest sympathy with his point

of view or conduct, not one. How can the German comrades, therefore, have the idea that I showed sympathies for Landau? If I wrote to Naville at that time—as my letter will prove—it was to tell him that under no circumstances would I support his stand, and in particular was I unalterably opposed to his alliance with Landau. As for Naville himself, the same thing applies as to Landau: Let anybody show a single word I ever wrote him or anyone else giving the faintest indication of any support to him or his faction.

As you know, I *did* hesitate for some time before taking a final position on the European disputes. But this hesitation—the committee as a whole hesitated on the matter—was in no way a *support* to Landau or Naville, but an anxiety to have the situation before us as completely as possible before taking a definite stand. I tried to explain these hesitations (I am not “defending them in principle”) in my letters to you of about a year ago or more. If by your accusation of my support to these elements you refer to my hesitations, I must acknowledge that you are right; if you mean actual support, I cannot accept your conclusions. At the very height of the disputes in France and Germany, there was not one single comrade here who understood my conduct or opinion as any kind of support to Landau or Naville; nor was it possible for Landau and Naville to understand it in this light, for they received not the slightest encouragement from my side.

2. In Europe: Your references to my conduct during the recent trip to Europe still remain entirely obscure to me. As to France, there is not one single comrade who can say that I expressed any opinion on the internal situation in the Ligue at a single one of the meetings I attended. Comrades Frank and Molinier can tell you that I expressed to them plainly my opinion that I do not support either Naville or the Jewish Group or Mill. What I did tell them was that they were making a mistake in basing themselves so heavily upon Treint and his group, thereby alienating the workers in the Jewish Group instead of winning them over to mutual work and confidence. Comrade Frank would further be able to inform you that he told me, in reply to my statements to him, that he disagreed with Raymond’s collaboration with Treint and antagonizing of the Jewish comrades, and instead of that agreed with me. I did not speak publicly at any meeting because I feared that whatever I said would be distorted factionally by one or another

and interpreted as the stand of the American League. I made it clear to all the comrades that I had asked for no mandate, and had no mandate, to speak in the name of our League. No comrade can point to a single "act" or "word" while I was in France to justify what you say about my conduct. As for Spain: I was sent there by the secretariat on the proposal of comrade Molinier. I tried in vain to convince the comrades to start publishing *El Soviet* again. I argued with them against their tendency to blame Molinier for everything that ever happened in Spain. I argued a number of times with Lacroix and Andrade against their tendency to live an "isolated national" existence by not informing the membership of the situation in the international so that the OCE [Oposición Comunista de España] as a whole would take a position. With some of the criticisms made of Molinier by Lacroix, I was compelled, it is true, to agree; but my agreement did not go very much further than the criticism you make of comrade Molinier in one of your letters to Nin. As for Lacroix's outbursts against the Ligue, I do not agree with them. Since I returned to the United States, I have written two letters to Spain: one technical request in the name of the League, asking for correspondence to our theoretical organ; another letter to Lacroix telling him that I could not permit him to use my name in any way for his struggle against the leadership of the French Ligue. You imply, I think, in one of your letters to Glotzer that I have written to Nin about "Trotsky starting a campaign against Shachtman"; I have never written to Nin in my life; I have never written such a letter as you suggest to any comrade in any part of the world. This suspicion is absolutely unjustified, just as unjustified as your fear that I had something to do with the Felix article which appeared in the *Militant*.

The only "conduct" to which I can possibly think you refer is my letter to you from Paris. It was a personal letter, which I did not for a moment pretend to be the viewpoint of anybody but myself. Many things I say there may have been wrong. But when I reread it I cannot find any real grounds for your view that I support Naville or the Jewish Group. You may be sure that if I did, I should say so in those words. It is true that I expressed myself about Mill in such a way as might lead you to think that I support his tendency; this was not my intention. I can only repeat here what I have tried to emphasize in my recent letters to you: I do

not support Mill's tendency; I do not support the Jewish Group, and especially not its action in withdrawing representatives from the executive committee. I do believe that it was more correct on the trade-union question than the other comrades, and I said so to Molinier and Frank, just as I told them that they were not acting in a manner calculated to win over the Jewish comrades. I expressed my disagreement with the attitude of Treint, my conviction that the "experiment of collaboration" with Treint would not prove successful. The latest events, I think, show that Treint (as comrade Frank now writes to me) did not live up in any way to the hopes placed in him.

One last word on Germany. I spoke somewhat critically about the German comrades in my Paris letter to you. My views were based on reports I received from Andrade and from Frank and Molinier; also, on the sharp letters you wrote to the Leipzig organization on "workers control" and the "Gourov letter."³⁵² You interpret my remarks as "an echo of my sympathies for Landau." I cannot add anything to what I have tried to say in a number of recent letters about this, except that the activities developed recently by our German comrades have shown that the impression I gained in Paris was unfounded; I am glad to revise an opinion I held for the moment.

I express again the hope that the foregoing may help to clarify matters between us. I want to add another word about the results of your recent letters and their effects on our internal American dispute. You write that you are unwilling to consider Shachtman's American position separate from his international position. In the first place, I do not believe that I have such a sharply different position on international questions as you write. In the second place, it is far from a question of "Shachtman's position." Comrades Glotzer, Abern, and Spector have been together with me for a long time in our internal disputes here. We have taken a position for a long time in the League on a number of important points, which we are convinced affect the present and future of the League to a tremendous extent. Our opponents in the League, comrades Cannon and Swabeck, avoid an answer to all the important problems we pose by declaring that I am a Landau, a Naville, and whatnot. Be sure that we do not have to be told (like Naville) to roll up our sleeves and work for the organization. We have been doing that from the first day, when others went into

retirement. But how effective can our collaboration be when the accusation is hurled that Shachtman is an American Naville? Naville was removed from the editorial board of *Lutte* for his petty-bourgeois, anti-organizational conduct, and rightly so. Why should not the American Naville suffer the same fate? To cry for collaboration and to make it impossible in reality is not the way to achieve it, and that is what we want comrade Cannon to understand. When you continue to refer to my conduct in Europe without specifying what you refer to concretely, it is difficult for me to express my viewpoint and defend it. When you charge me with supporting tendencies which I do not support and refuse to support, you are making it difficult for my part at least to establish a position clearly in the League.

I hope you will soon have the opportunity to reply to this letter.

PS: Your article on the "labor party" established the necessary clarity.



The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect

by Martin Abern, Albert Glotzer,
and Max Shachtman³⁵³

4 June 1932

Submitted on the eve of the National Committee plenum, this document was written as a reply to Cannon and Swabek's "Internal Problems of the CLA."³⁵⁴ It was withdrawn during the plenum proceedings, but when the fight flared up again following the plenum, the Shachtman group resubmitted it for publication in the CLA Internal Bulletin. On July 14 the resident committee adopted Cannon's motion to publish "Prospect and Retrospect" in the projected IB series, along with a comprehensive response that he would write. Cannon's draft reply dealt centrally with international questions, although he characterized "Prospect and Retrospect" as "from first to last" "a personal attack against Cannon" and promised to deal with the purely personal accusations in an appen-

*dix.*³⁵⁵ Cannon never completed the draft or the appendix. Thus "Prospect and Retrospect" was never published in the IB, although it circulated extensively through private channels in the CLA.

The three and a half years of propaganda activity which we have carried through in this country makes it necessary for us to draw up a balance of where we stand today so that we shall better be able to outline our tasks for the coming period and proceed to meet them. For a whole series of reasons, the casting of this balance has been avoided and neglected by us. Now it cannot be postponed any longer because the situation which has developed in our National Committee and the organization as a whole makes it impossible to gloss over the past and to live the future from hand to mouth. That the existing differences in our ranks have forced their way through and even appeared in a sharp form is not an accident but the inevitable result of two facts: 1. In the past these differences, in one form or another, have been pushed down into the subsoil of the organization, which did not eliminate them but only made their appearance seem abrupt; 2. The League is approaching a certain turning point in its progress which inevitably brings with it a reconsideration of what has gone before. This makes an open and frank discussion of our internal problems necessary at the present juncture, and we need not be deterred from it by the fact that our enemies will attempt to capitalize on our difficulties or that our organization will be to an extent temporarily diverted from its day-to-day activities. We will be able to reduce these disadvantages to an absolute minimum and make the maximum gains in the coming days provided that we present our position as it actually is, discuss our real differences without distortions, avoid an atmosphere of panic and threat, and seek at all times to draw positive lessons for the future.

The Possibilities Before the League

All considerations of the objective situation lead to the conclusion that the League now has good possibilities for progress. The bankruptcy of Stalinism on the international arena is beginning to penetrate the consciousness of the Communist workers. Our course is being verified with almost mathematical precision and most strikingly in the Soviet Union, in Germany, and in Spain. The international events are working for us night and day. In conformity with our predictions, the right-wing "international" is

undergoing a process of disintegration which will inevitably bring more of its ranks to our side. The breakup of the Brandler group; the highly significant letter of Neurath of Czechoslovakia to Brandler; the passage of MacDonald of Canada into our camp; the inexorable breakdown of the barriers of antagonism toward us on the part of the Lovestone ranks in this country; and, what is most gratifying, the growth of sympathy for our views, in full or in part, within the official Party—all these speak eloquently of the tendency in our direction which can be considerably accelerated if we are alert and strike systematically. In the United States, despite the fact that the official Party still embraces the bulk of the Communist workers, it continues to lose ground organizationally, especially in comparison with the magnificent objective possibilities afforded it. The terrific (100 percent) turnover in its membership shows that the Party has been unable to consolidate organizationally the huge growth of Communist sympathy among the workers in the past three years. Had we now at our disposal the internal Party faction about which we write so frequently, there is no doubt that we could move far more swiftly toward establishing a deeper unity with the official Party ranks.

If the League now measures up to the increased possibilities put before it, it will be able to realize excellent prospects. Our backwardness, conditioned by a whole series of past events, will give way to a faster pace. "The slowness of the growth of the League," writes comrade Trotsky, "is to be accounted for primarily by the lack of great shifts in the American working class in recent years. As I have already mentioned elsewhere, it may be presumed that the crisis in America creates for the first time premises for revolutionary work on a broader scale. It is to be hoped that, thanks to the preceding systematic education of cadres, the American League will enter into the new period more or less prepared. Although," he adds, "it should not be concealed that the real testing of the cadres is still ahead."

How should the League arm itself for the coming period? It must undertake a general tightening of its ranks. It must not only engage in greater activities in general, but above all the League must turn its eyes and efforts toward an increased direct participation in the class struggle. Our small numbers put definite limits to this work, but we have conducted a sufficient propaganda training in our ranks to enable us to make a serious beginning in

initiating movements on our own responsibility. (We have in mind particularly the movement in Minneapolis, in the Illinois coalfields, and in New York.) Our perspective has no similarity with the fantastic notions of Weisbord, nor is it calculated upon turning our backs to the Party. Quite the contrary. We have talked interminably about creating a faction in the Party, but we have taken no steps toward it in actuality; we have not even worked out a plan to realize this goal, so that our agitation for it—to say nothing of our action, which barely exists—has borne an entirely haphazard character.

Before all, the National Committee must be transformed into a genuine working body, alive and energetic, which takes up the problems of the movement and really leads it, instead of, as has too often been the case, being dragged along by the events themselves. Allowing for all the natural and at present unavoidable limitations, one vital question after another has had to lie for months on our agenda because the time of our committee has been occupied by comparative trivialities and secondary questions. Even the systematization of our work has had an occasional character. A radical improvement must therefore be made in this connection. Not only should the National Committee change its manner of work, but, like the League as a whole, it must be broadened. Its narrow, exclusive base must be extended considerably to embrace the collaboration of new elements, drawing in new forces particularly from those outside the ranks of the old Cannon group in the Party. It has always been indisputable for us that one of the great advantages that the American National Committee had over the leaderships of some of the other sections of the Opposition was its common Party origin, its long habit of collaboration, its united entry into the ranks of the Left Opposition. But this also has its weak sides and has become a source of *ingrowing conservatism* which can only be overcome by refreshing the ranks of the leadership with new forces. To overlook this need, to minimize it, or to resist it (as was done at our last national conference, which endorsed this resistance without realizing what was involved) can only have harmful effects for our movement. In general, our committee must make itself aware of its own great shortcomings and defects, and not merely of its positive sides and achievements, for this is the first prerequisite to overcoming defects, not only in its ranks but throughout the organization.

We have already made progress in many fields. The *Militant* has been reestablished as a weekly. We have issued the first few numbers of a monthly Greek paper, *Communistes*. We have made a big stride forward in gaining the ear of a couple of thousand Jewish workers with the aid of *Unser Kampf*, laying the basis for organizational growth in this field, and not least of our advances has been our ability to maintain *Young Spartacus*, which reaches hundreds of young workers throughout the country. Our literature, more varied than that of any other section, has met with a wide response. There can be no doubt that we have greatly increased the circle of our sympathizers in the last three years. Equally indubitable is the fact that our organizational growth has in no way corresponded to this increase of prestige and sympathy, as well as the general possibilities. The six-months organizational report made almost a year ago (Swabeck, 17 July 1931) showed a total of 156 members. With all the literary and political progress we have made since, our membership today is barely greater. The fact that the League's membership for virtually the whole past period has continued to hover around 150 to 170 members is not a good sign of organizational progress and does not reflect our growth in other spheres. We must bridge the wide gap that exists, first by recognizing the fact and not sinking into a priggish self-complacency, and secondly by setting our perspectives and organizing our activities in harmony with the possibilities.

This means, in the first place, an orientation of our work in the direction we have indicated above; secondly, a sharp improvement in the functioning of the leading committee. It cannot be done by setting up remote perspectives with which we are to wait for the "inevitable smashup of centrism." Neither can our tasks be met by the preparations being made for a drastic "retrenchment" in the League's work. Against our judgment the committee has already decided to give up the theoretical review. In view of the "French period" which we must allegedly go through now, comrade Cannon has already announced that he is prepared to give up the Greek and youth papers entirely, reduce *Unser Kampf* to a monthly, and if necessary retreat to a semimonthly *Militant*. *We are totally opposed to these measures and find no real need of taking them.* It has been proven that we have the possibilities for maintaining all these activities, and even for going forward (especially

among the youth and the Jewish workers). Such steps in no way correspond with the real situation and our prospects, and they must be rejected forthwith.

But we shall be compelled to take even these steps and the prospects we have will vanish quicker than they arose, if we do not eliminate the threat of a split which hangs over the head of the organization. We do not ground our opposition to a split on sentiment. A split is inevitable and sometimes even desirable if there exist irreconcilable differences on fundamental questions of principle or if, in general, one of the conflicting tendencies represents an alien current in the movement. We do not believe this to be the case in the present disputes.

At the same time, an organization of our kind, separated from the main current of the class struggle by the powerful Stalinist apparatus and other factors, constantly threatened with isolation, ingrowth, and circle spirit, tends to have its inevitable frictions develop on various questions and to become increasingly acute. There is no particular cause for pessimism in this, for such developments have always attended the early years of every small, isolated revolutionary group. But while this may be one of the explanations of them, it is not a justification for their continuance. The League will experience only their corroding effects if the disputes are not brought into the open and discussed so that a solution may be arrived at. But the only way to achieve a real solution in the discussion is to put the disputed points as they are in truth, against their proper background and traced to their actual origins. Further, it is the real difference that should be emphasized, none should be invented or exaggerated, nothing should be covered up, remote and individual issues should not be magnified all out of their real proportions. For years the Russian Opposition had to conduct a bitter fight to have its views presented as they were in actuality, to resist having other views ascribed to them, and to refuse to defend views which they did not entertain. In their platform our Russian comrades posed the question of "Real and Alleged Differences." That is the way we want to put the questions: as they really were and are. The document of comrades Cannon and Swabeck serves precisely the contrary purpose, and not out of accident or ignorance, for both comrades are just as well aware as we are of the *real origin and nature of the disputes in the committee.*

Differences—Real and Otherwise

Their principal contention, around which their whole document revolves, is put as follows: "Our disputes with him (Shachtman) *began* with the international questions, especially on the way of approaching and dealing with them" (emphasis in the original).

For the past year or so, within the resident National Committee, and particularly between comrade Shachtman on the one side and the present writers on the other...there have been slowly but steadily developing divergences over questions which we consider decisive for the future of our movement.

This simply does not explain the nature of our disputes. It seeks however to rewrite our brief internal history arbitrarily *by conveniently wiping out two and a half years of it*. If their assertion that the disputes *began* on the international questions only a *year* ago is true, then how is one to explain the fact that sharp differences existed in the committee *three years* ago and lasted to the present time, that the differences go back prior to our First National Conference, became increasingly acute, to the point where the work of the League was paralyzed and the organization brought to a virtual standstill, that we were compelled to call a special plenum of the National Committee *two years ago* (May 1930) for the sole purpose of discussing our internal disputes, etc., etc. The way in which this is "explained" is that it is not even mentioned in their document! This is no doubt a convenient and "simplified" method of conducting the dispute, only it has the disadvantage of not being an honest presentation of the facts.

Further: If their assertion is true (that is, the disputes began with *Shachtman on international* questions), how is one to explain the fact that the other signatories to the present document, who have been in solidarity with comrade Shachtman for three years, but against whom nobody claims to have any "disputes on the international questions"—that these comrades have been in conflict with comrades Cannon and Swabeck, particularly the former, during the whole past period? If the international disputes are to explain the differences with comrade Shachtman, then what is to explain the differences with comrades Abern, Glotzer, and Spector (to mention only members of our committee)? Once more, the "explanation" is made by completely ignoring the question.

The mere posing of the above two questions already indicates how false, from beginning to end, is the presentation of Cannon

and Swabek, how little calculated it is to make possible a genuine and fruitful discussion, to attain a clarification and solution of the difficult situation in which the League, especially its National Committee, now finds itself. In order, therefore, to put the questions aright and to make it possible to view the situation from its proper perspective, it is necessary to start at the beginning. This will involve a brief sketch of *our development in the past three or more years*. It will show what were the real disputes, exactly how serious or important they were, to what extent they are involved today. It will show further that their assertions of the origin of the disputes are false, that the differences on international questions which do not indeed exist, but which have been deliberately magnified and distorted, *were* tacked on artificially to the other issues and were converted into a factional football, which only renders it increasingly difficult for the League to have an objective discussion of the problems of our international and to draw the positive lessons from the internal struggle of European sections. It will show finally that a disloyal use has been made of the sharp criticism which comrade Trotsky has made of comrade Shachtman in order to obliterate everything that has happened before in the League, thus offering comrade Cannon an oversimple way out of his own recent past.

This will be done by documents which cannot be contested. An absolute minimum of other references, not documentary but equally indisputable, will be made in order to complete the picture of the past. We have not the slightest intention of avoiding an answer to any of the points raised in the C-S document, and all of them, including the question of the disputes in our international, will be dealt with adequately.

The manner of expulsion from the Party in October 1928 put the immediate direction of the Opposition's work in the hands of comrades Abern, Cannon, and Shachtman. Excellent relations existed at the outset inside the Action Committee and between the committee and the ranks. Friction and the disputes existing before the Sixth Congress of the Comintern were eliminated or forgotten in the enthusiasm and activity which marked our first few months. In many respects model internal conditions were established for the advancement of our movement. All the comrades collaborated intimately, amicably, and, above all, energetically. Unfortunately, this condition lasted only for the first few months. After this first

wave of expulsions, the committee began to droop due to the steady reduction of activity of the outstanding leader of the Opposition, Cannon. Not for the first time, not for the last, comrade Cannon began to lean back in his chair and leave others to do all the work which had been entrusted to him. We began at that time to hear incessantly about our work being a "protracted uphill struggle," an entirely sound warning for calling off overzealous hotheads and for preventing overexpectant optimists, who looked for quick results and victories, from being crushed under inevitable disappointments and temporary setbacks—but behind which we soon detected a *justification for conservatism, inactivity, a tendency to let things drift*, which became worse in the succeeding period.

On the very eve of the First National Conference (May 1929) comrade Cannon, who at that time had certain personal difficulties, proposed to put off the conference entirely and tell the delegates to cancel their preparations to attend. This proposal came together with another which stupefied us completely: Cannon proposed to quit the center entirely, retire to the West (Missouri) for the next period, send an occasional letter of advice from afar, and "leave the leadership in the hands of the younger comrades." In view of the place he occupied in the leadership of our young movement at that time, such a departure (argued because of the "protracted nature") would have demoralized the movement completely, particularly at that time when we were under the heaviest attacks of the Stalinist press. Under our strongest pressure and pledges to facilitate matters here as much as possible, Cannon was finally dissuaded from his idea (which was not, by the way, the first time it was advanced by him, and further, not by him alone) and prevailed upon at the last minute to attend the conference.

At the conference in Chicago a considerable enthusiasm was aroused by our main proposal to launch the Opposition as an organization (Communist League of America) and to transform the *Militant* into a weekly. In addition, despite the discouraging experience we had already had in the center, we reserved our opinions completely, and together with the other leading delegates urged upon Cannon the need of his remaining actively in the center. Decisions were made to provide special support for the maintenance of comrade Cannon in the office, and he was selected as both secretary of the League and editor of the *Militant*. Every

possible measure was taken to facilitate his task, including the establishment of a small staff of coworkers in New York: Abern, Shachtman, and Spector, who was brought down from Canada to strengthen the center. Once more we expected the desirable change.

But it did not take many weeks for our expectations to be exploded. Right after the conference, we were given a more striking illustration of how comrade Cannon interpreted in practice the otherwise general phrase about the "protracted" character of our fight. Without the slightest reason, the administrative work of the League was grossly neglected. The *Militant* came out through the efforts of comrade Shachtman and without anything but the most formal assistance of comrade Cannon. Letters from all over the country continued to accumulate on the secretarial desk—unanswered. Only those letters were answered which comrade Abern was able to take care of. Letters of inquiry and complaint about the collapse and nonfunctioning of the center—and comrade Swabeck, then in Chicago, wrote not a few of them—met with the same fate: the unanswered file. Cannon's attendance at the office began to assume minimum, haphazard proportions.

Finally, when matters had reached a point where we were threatened with a complete rupture of the bonds holding the organization together, tying the branches to the center—where not only had the campaign for the weekly *Militant* been allowed to die, together with the enthusiasm for it generated at the national conference, but even the semimonthly began to look more like a monthly—comrades Abern, Shachtman, and Spector threw all other considerations to the winds and suggested in the most comradely manner that Cannon devote himself to his administrative duties. Comrade Cannon received this suggestion in the most hostile manner imaginable. He considered it an affront and listened sulkily to all our suggestions. His only reply was that there was no money coming in to maintain him and the paper and that there wasn't much use in writing for money which could not be obtained.

As was proven after Cannon left the office, when we entered into a vigorous drive for the weekly, financial support was available in the League, providing only the center functioned in a responsible manner and not by perfunctory and sporadic dabbling in the administrative work or even by complete neglect of it.

Our proposal that he give a minimum attention to his work,

too obviously justified, could not be entirely rejected. But the "improvement" lasted little more than a week. Comrade Cannon once more fell back into his previous torpor. The grudgingly given promises simply did not materialize and the League continued to spiral downward, passing by every opportunity (and there were many) with a speed directly the reverse of Cannon's. When we were again compelled to point out to Cannon what should have been obvious to him, Cannon replied to this "presumptuousness" by launching a slanderous assault upon Spector, denouncing him as another intellectual, another Pepper, another Weinstone. In this field he revealed a fierce energy that would have been far better applied to the work assigned to him by the conference. (It might be added here that Cannon is "turning the tables" on his opponents today in a very similar manner, only more than one comrade now appears where Spector before was alone.)

With collaboration reduced to a minimum in this period, we nevertheless continued with our attempt to maintain Cannon in the office, even though as secretary he did no secretarial work and as editor no editorial work. We were actuated by our anxiety to avoid an open crisis in the organization as long as possible and hoped that, sharp as the conflicts were, they might nevertheless be smoothed over in time. Because of the financial impossibility of remaining in New York and the creation by Cannon of this venomous atmosphere, Spector was compelled to return to Canada. Abern and Shachtman (as well as Spector before he left New York) had withdrawn from the payroll and contributed their work in free time, so as to make Cannon's continuance in the office easier. The difficulties were "settled" in the end by comrade Cannon getting a job outside and proposing Abern and Shachtman to take over the immediate direction of the work "in his place." This was done.

It would not be entirely correct to say that Cannon made no contribution at all during this period. But those he made were aimed exclusively at further "retrenchments" in accordance with the, by that time, well-known "protracted" struggle. The National Committee in those days, crumbling before our very eyes, occupied itself week after week with one long, unceasing argument against Cannon's stubborn proposals to reduce the *Militant* to a monthly, when we had decided on a campaign to make it a weekly!

The minutes of that period reveal that we would take up nothing but this question for whole sessions:

Motion by Cannon to revert to monthly during summer months and use funds on hand to rent and equip an office—Lost 3-1

— Minutes, 13 June 1929, the only point on agenda
Financial report and proposals of JPC.

Motion JPC—to revert to monthly for summer months.
For: JPC. Against: MA, MS, Spector.

— Minutes, 25 June 1929

Had we not resisted this “long-term perspective” of comrade Cannon, with its accompaniment of folding our hands and waiting for better days, we might today be stewing obscurely in the juices of a semimonthly publication. As will be seen later, every time a similar situation arose, the same battle had to be fought to a greater or lesser degree.

It was only with Cannon’s departure from the office that we began to slowly and laboriously pick up the threads again and reassemble the branches into an organization. The enthusiasm for the weekly *Militant*, which had been frittered away for months, was aroused by us once more. Cannon, who had been strongly opposed to the weekly while he was in the office, became even more actively opposed afterward. He resisted it on the grounds that to start the weekly *Militant* would be adventurism (!), that it would be to build upon a speculative basis (!). His main contribution to the campaign can be summed up in his repeated proposals to “stabilize the *Militant* as a semimonthly” or else to revert to a monthly. The campaign was conducted without much assistance from Cannon, to put it moderately.

When in spite of this, the excellent response throughout the country convinced us of the possibility of starting the weekly, we finally decided to launch it and did toward the end of 1929. Comrade Cannon, evidently under the impression that the absence of one comrade would not affect our work in a period of “protracted uphill struggle,” thereupon simply and literally deserted the League entirely. For more than two months from the time we actually got the first issue of the weekly, Cannon was not to be seen near the League. With no experience in running a printing plant, with a staff cut down to two National Committee members,

Abern and Shachtman, and the multiplicity of difficulties attendant upon such a situation, we had to cope in addition with the passive sabotage of Cannon. He did not attend a single committee meeting during this whole period; he did not attend a single branch meeting (not even the affair to celebrate the advent of the weekly) during that period; he did not write a single line for us during this period. A glance through the *Militant* for this time shows that between the first issue of the weekly (30 November 1929) and 25 January 1930, there is not a word contributed by comrade Cannon; thereafter, there was an article once every three or four numbers, with another absence between 22 February 1930 and 19 April 1930, on which date he devoted himself to a review of Liebkecht's memoirs of Marx!

Comrade Swabeck has just set the new fashion of denouncing us as "abstentionists" who "criticize from the sidelines"; together with comrade Cannon, they write of Shachtman's conduct as a "series of blows to the organization." But nowhere in any of their documents will there be found the faintest reference to the real (and not manufactured) abstentionist, or to the series of real and not fancied blows which Cannon himself delivered and from the effects of which we have not yet completely recovered. But the fact cannot be eradicated that these actions, which are now lightly dismissed as "insignificant personal incidents," were blows struck in the dark at the League, without explanation or justification, and moreover not a single active comrade at that time construed comrade Cannon's conduct in anything but the most serious manner, as will be shown.

Abstentionism and Conservatism During the "Weekly Period"

Cannon's unexplained and demonstrative absence made the New York branch members uneasy. The passage of weeks without even a glimpse of him sent a rumble of disturbance and inquiry through the comrades. One after another asked privately concerning "what was up." Out of an exaggerated and ridiculous sense of loyalty to Cannon we deliberately put off the questioners. Many comrades can testify to how we sought to cover up Cannon, told them that "he was just here before you came in"—all with the hope of finding a solution eventually without throwing the organization into a crisis that was maturing before our very eyes. Our "explanations" did not, however, give much satisfaction to the

comrades. As for Cannon, he never gave an explanation of his conduct. He did, however, succeed in sowing demoralization throughout the League, particularly in New York, and in virtually destroying the committee at that time, which became reduced to Abern and Shachtman, who could not manifestly function as a committee in the real sense of the word.

Not only in New York was this uneasiness felt by the comrades, but elsewhere too. Many finally gave expression to it. At the present moment, when the theory is advanced that the disputes *began* on international questions, it is interesting to quote a letter to Abern from Glotzer, who was then in Chicago with Swabeck, not yet fully aware of all that was happening in the center. "Arne is not satisfied with the relations....He thinks that there is a difference in perspective and what we could expect in the way of development for the League in the coming period. To be somewhat more specific, he thinks that either you or Max has illusions as to our growth, or if not illusions, at least a wrong perspective" (23 September 1929). Our "illusions" and "wrong perspective," according to comrade Cannon, consisted in our insistence on starting the weekly and our belief in its vitality.

But this did not prevent Cannon's warmest defender today, Swabeck, who now writes about us with such gusto as "abstentionists" criticizing from the sidelines, from feeling the general alarm about Cannon's deliberate withdrawal from the League. He felt compelled finally to write to Cannon from Chicago on 5 December 1929, that is, even weeks before Cannon finally decided to bring his retirement to a close (our emphasis throughout):

Your complete absence from all activities in our movement for a long time has become noticeable not only to such comrades as myself, who are able to keep our finger fairly close to the pulse, but by comrades in general. Personally I have received several inquiries from several comrades in regard to it. I am speaking of complete absence because this is what it practically amounts to when one compares the past with the present....The reason for this complete absence of yours has not been explained to me or to any other comrade that I know of. Nor do I believe a satisfactory explanation could be given....I thought shortly after the change of staff had taken place and you retired so far to the background, a short relief for adjustments of personal difficulties is quite in order. I found it reasonable as a matter of temporary—that is, very temporary—arrangement. I realized, of course, that you would have to devote some time to relieve your mind of responsibilities of a personal character. Now, however, I

feel quite alarmed noting that this retirement or absence of yours has become so complete and of such a permanent character. I am not asking you to make any answer to me as a personal matter, but *rather to the movement* (our emphasis).

This letter was written, we repeat, even before Cannon made his retirement so complete that he was not to be seen in the office at all.

This calculated absence was not without its effect. Enthusiasm began to fall off because the comrades were perturbed and uneasy and uncertain about what tomorrow might bring—some shock, some unlooked-for blow. Only as a last resort—when Cannon had even failed to reply to polite notes sent to him to attend committee meetings—did we feel compelled to write to two or three leading comrades, committee members, so that they would know what the situation was and not be taken unawares by anything that might happen subsequently. The effect of this state of affairs was soon translated into a fall in the financial income, and, deprived of direct assistance as we were, it became increasingly difficult to handle the growing tasks. We were determined to leave no stone unturned to *maintain the weekly* which had quickly cut a place for itself in the movement and had been warmly received by our comrades and sympathizers.

We therefore decided, especially because, in addition, the discussions in favor of establishing an international center of the Opposition had been favorably received in Europe following the debacle of Urbahns and Paz, to send comrade Shachtman to Europe for the threefold purpose: of establishing direct contact with the European sections of the Opposition and with comrade Trotsky; of initiating an international conference and establishing an authoritative Opposition center; of requesting financial assistance from the Russian Opposition. We got a first indication of Cannon's concern over internationalism by his reaction to this.

If Cannon had opposed the launching of the weekly, he was even more violently opposed to this proposal. Toward the latter part of the existence of the weekly, he had returned to the office as abruptly as he had left it, without a word of explanation, and only, as we learned, after a peremptory letter from Swabeck. Cannon countered our proposal with one to sink the weekly without a trace, to return to a semimonthly, print pamphlets instead, and pay off our old debts! It is interesting to note that more than

a year later, when we decided for the second time to launch the weekly, Cannon was compelled to use all our arguments against him in 1930 in order to reply to the opponents of the weekly in 1931, who opposed it with the same arguments that he himself used a year before! His arguments on the floor would have sounded more convincing to us (who had no need of being convinced) did we not realize that Cannon was merely echoing our arguments in reply to some comrades in the New York branch who were merely echoing *his* arguments.

Carried away by his zeal in opposing the weekly *Militant*, Cannon went so far as to advance the most absurd and even reactionary and philistine arguments against the trip to Europe, which was intended primarily to get aid for its preservation. He asserted that the establishment of the weekly was not a real but a fictitious advance; that we were maintaining it on a speculative basis; that to continue it was adventurism; and not only that, but *he argued that in the past in this and other countries the movement had been corrupted by subsidies, that we must avoid the same thing now, etc., etc.* If this had any meaning at all it signified that Cannon interpreted the assistance which the Russian Opposition was at that time rendering to the national sections in various countries (and had been rendering for years back) as a source of corruption for the movement similar to that which had taken place under the Stalinist regime. It is not we alone who construed comrade Cannon's objections in this reactionary, insulting sense, but the other committee members as well, Swabeck included, as will be seen further on. (It might be added that later, under "different" conditions, Cannon forgot all his objections to "corrupting subsidy.")

Cannon was absolutely alone in his obstinate opposition. All the nonresident committee members voted for our proposal to send Shachtman to Europe as our representative in spite of Cannon's "warnings." On 11 February 1930, at a meeting in Chicago which was made possible by the attendance of comrade Skoglund of Minneapolis, Glotzer and Swabeck of Chicago, and Shachtman, who had come there in connection with personal matters arising out of a death in his family, the whole situation was discussed thoroughly. All the comrades present (including some leading Chicago members) expressed their deep concern over Cannon's past conduct. When the state of affairs in the resident committee had been discussed, it was Swabeck who finally

declared that he believed it might be necessary for us to expel Cannon publicly from the League so that—to use his words—Cannon would be unable to sneak out of the movement quietly! The other comrades present, notably comrade Skoglund, expressed themselves in a similar sense. Here again, we can see by this single fact how perfectly absurd, but very convenient (for its authors) is the contention in the C-S document that our disputes “*began on international questions.*”

While Shachtman was in Chicago, Cannon sent a lengthy letter to Swabeck, presenting his standpoint on the question of the trip to comrade Trotsky and repeating the same reactionary arguments he had given in New York. But this had no effect upon the decision of the other comrades. The vote was unanimous for our proposal to maintain the *Militant* and establish relations with the European Opposition. Cannon’s letter did not succeed in the slightest in allaying the perturbations in anyone’s mind, least of all in the mind of Swabeck, who, as we see, had lost confidence in Cannon and even contemplated the necessity of his public expulsion. After Glotzer had come to the center to aid in the work while Shachtman was absent; after Glotzer had been able to observe on the spot that all the criticisms of Cannon and his conduct were justified a thousand times over (from Chicago, both Glotzer and Swabeck had thought that Shachtman and Abern might be exaggerating somewhat)—Swabeck wrote him:

I shall not attempt even now to enter into any discussion on the questions you have raised in your letters....I am inclined to believe, however, that your estimation of the present relationship among comrades in the center is quite correct—sad to say....Sometime and hopefully soon, I feel we shall be able to establish an actual functioning center, not merely two comrades carrying the burden, but all of us working together. Then, I feel quite confident, we will be able to iron things out and start on a new basis. If worse should come to worse, and *nothing else but a little operation will do*, then that has to be performed. I am enclosing a copy of the letter I sent Jim in answer to his received at the time when Max was here. Be judicious. *I am sending it to you only because I fear that Jim will not fully discuss these points with you more than just perhaps in a formal manner.*

— 30 March 1930; our emphasis

To Cannon himself Swabeck, who was already speaking about him in connection with “little operations,” wrote in a very restrained manner, but quite definitely so that Cannon’s position at that time may be plainly seen:

I am certain that the disastrous effects of a subsidized movement in this country and for that matter elsewhere have been sufficiently demonstrated to convince all of us. That is, on the basis of subsidizing which has been established by the Stalin regime. But I am of the opinion that what was proposed and now carried out by the departure of Max *could not in any way be considered a matter of establishing that practice and certainly not in the Stalinist sense.* If that should be so then we were even wrong in accepting the small sum which was so generously made available toward helping initiate the *Militant*. Also, any financial speculative basis is an insecure one for any revolutionary movement at best and should be avoided. But in that respect, our very start with a publication was to a degree a speculative one, the arrival of the weekly naturally increasing our obligations and therewith our financial difficulties, if, then, however, this special measure can help us over the immediate difficulty, and give us a breathing space to endeavor to build a more secure basis, it should by all means be tried....Now as to our advance made to the weekly, *you say it was not well grounded and therefore not a real advance.* This I am surprised to hear from you at this time.

— March 1930; our emphasis

Unsuccessful in having the National Committee join him to sink the weekly so as to “confirm” ex post facto this repeated contention that the advance to the weekly was not real, well grounded, but speculative, Cannon transferred his activity to another field during the absence of Shachtman. He engaged in agitating members of the New York branch against the National Committee and particularly against Abern and Shachtman. The same comrade who is now so insistent upon the membership acknowledging and increasing the authority of the National Committee sat by quietly while Abern and Shachtman were denounced from the floor as “bureaucrats.” He had already declared at the committee meeting following Shachtman’s return from Chicago, after the decision on the European trip had been unanimously endorsed with the exception of his vote: “By this decision you comrades make further collaboration impossible.” He was as good as his word. Upon Shachtman’s return from Europe, the two or three New York branch members who had been fed by Cannon’s opposition launched an attack upon the report made by Shachtman on his visit with comrade Trotsky and the international conference. When they demanded that a referendum of the organization should have been taken before sending a delegate to an international gathering, Cannon again demonstrated his “solidarity” with the committee by maintaining a demonstrative silence and abstaining on

the vote in the branch. Furthest from his mind at that time was an interest in "international questions," in the international conference, in the situation in the European sections, or in "maintaining the authority of the leadership." He was dominated by the single thought of continuing a factional war against Abern and Shachtman and any stick he could pick up was good enough for him to throw. When the subsequent plenum succeeded in establishing a measure of peace in the committee, and Cannon was compelled to take a different attitude in the New York branch, one of the comrades he had incensed against us in the preceding period quite justly remarked that Cannon had left him "holding the bag"!

In short, our disputes with comrade Cannon over this whole period regarding his activities and the perspectives of the Opposition can be summed up in a letter written to comrade Swabek by Abern, a letter which shows that our *real* differences were not invented in order to cover up something else, but existed long before they are alleged by Cannon and Swabek to have "begun."

For a period of a year since the conference (and indeed one could say even before) there has been a definite difference of perspective before our movement and it has reflected itself in the activities and attitude of the comrades. Whether this difference of perspective on the tasks of the Opposition in this period that has been and the immediate period to come has ramifications and meaning of an even more important character, I will not at this time undertake to discuss....Of the period before the conference, the period immediately following the conference, and preceding the establishment of the weekly *Militant*, and since the establishment of the weekly, up to literally now, we can say, without in any way removing such responsibility and share of errors that may be felt also to the rest of us, Cannon has played a role that, speaking for myself, has indelibly impressed itself in my mind, and not on the positive side for him. To use blunt words for rough facts, the way I see it, JPC deserted the work here, for the period after the conference and virtually the entire period since...the Opposition is not merely that which was before in the Communist Party. It is not merely an added growth, as some, it appears, would think. It is a development of, and also a break with, some things and conceptions of the past. We have eliminated but we have also taken much that is new, and that much is clear to all. Our Opposition receives its strength primarily not by a national group evolution, but by its entry into the period and field of international thought and organization; our adhesion to the international Opposition led by Trotsky.

— Abern, 4 April 1932

The New York comrades were not alone in their views on Cannon's status at that time; these views were shared generally to a greater or lesser extent. What comrade Swabeck thought of the situation has already been indicated from his letters. In that same period comrade Dunne of Minneapolis wrote us, after referring to his "considering Jim out of the picture for a time at least," as follows:

I am at a loss when it comes to speak about Jim. What indeed can be said? Unless there is something that I do not know, we have only to grieve over the loss of a powerful figure from the movement, and as you suggest, hope for a turn or a change that will send him back into the fight. As to the conduct of the affairs of the League and the *Militant*, I for one am not at all apprehensive. Marty and Max can and will carry on until more forces come to us and they will act as they have in the past, as the true revolutionaries, sharing the responsibilities with others so far as that is possible.

— 4 January 1930

Other comrades expressed even deeper feelings about the situation. From Canada, comrade Spector wrote to Abern:

In these circumstances, one must ponder the political basis for C's attitude of hostility and passivity. What game is he playing? At this distance, it seems to me that we shall have to confront the question whether the American Opposition is a Trotsky group or a Cannon group....But C will be making the biggest mistake of his political career if he entertains the visions of reconstituting himself as leader of a group of his own on the basis of the old Lovestone-Foster-Cannon triangle.

— 26 March 1930

It is clear that such a situation could not be permitted to endure. Finding it impossible to arrive at a solution in the resident committee, we decided to call a plenum of the National Committee. We assiduously sought to avert an open struggle in the organization as long as possible, hoping that the attainment of some solution would enable us to avoid throwing the League into an acute and painful crisis. We believe this to be one of the primary obligations of a Communist leadership: not to throw every single disputed point into the organization as a whole for premature and distorted discussion, except as a last resort; to seek first to arrive at an agreement in the leading bodies of the organization so that the solidity and mobility of the leadership may be preserved and not disrupted on every occasion when a difference of opinion prevails; and only when it appears insoluble there, to transmit the

disputes to the organization as a whole, which is the only body left to solve a dispute. A contrary procedure would tend to throw the organization into a frenzy of internal discussion and dispute each time its leading committee is confronted with a difference of opinion. At the same time, however, it is also clear to us that a grave error was made in that period by not plainly informing the membership of the League of the facts of the disputes and the nature of them. Had they been informed, it is more than possible that the plenum which was called in the summer of 1930 would have yielded more positive results. Even worse than that was our failure at any time to inform comrade Trotsky and the International Secretariat.

The plenum made no really fundamental decisions on the disputes. No document was adopted, no clear line was set out to guide us in the future. The days were spent in an exhaustive discussion of the state of affairs in the committee, but what came out of them was less a clear-cut solution than it was a tacit understanding of the need of continuing the collaboration of the leading comrades on an improved basis. Once again, despite our discouraging experiences, we agreed to make the effort in the interests of advancing the organization. It is true that not one single comrade attending the plenum supported comrade Cannon or condoned his past conduct. Nevertheless, it was the consensus of opinion that another start had to be made, particularly in order to preserve the weekly, that a large measure of collaboration had to be assured, etc., etc.

At this point let it be emphasized that during this whole period there was no question of the Naville tendency, no question of Landau, and no other question of international dispute before us; there was no question about what is today alleged to be our false attitude toward the New York branch (the only such question was that in which Cannon was concerned through his incitement of branch members against the National Committee); there was no question of "Carterism" or of our "false attitude" toward the youth. In a word, the questions literally did not exist which Cannon, for interested reasons, now pushes to the fore to the obliteration of everything that has happened in the past, which he inflates from tiny balloons into his zeppelins of factional war against the undersigned. As has been said, the convenience of this method for those who make use of it cannot be questioned; but its harmony

with loyal procedure in the proletarian movement is more than dubious.

The Theory of the "Gestation" of the Cannon Group

Following the plenum, the work of the committee and consequently of the organization as a whole was considerably improved. Comrade Spector was once more brought from Canada, making a resident committee of five members which immediately proved its advantages over the previous committee of two and three members. But our past disputes had barely been laid aside when comrade Cannon began to put forward with considerable insistence his theory of the "gestation" of our Left Opposition inside the womb of the old Cannon Party group. Notwithstanding the fact that all the undersigned were also members of the former Cannon group, we together with comrade Spector categorically rejected the ridiculous theory advanced by Cannon which is another one of the axes around which his present position revolved and which sticks out of every sentence in the document presented jointly with comrade Swabeck. This theory has been advanced innumerable times by comrade Cannon in speeches, was stated by him twice in writing, and finally had to be formally rejected by the Second National Conference, only to reappear in the document to which the undersigned are replying. It is stated by Cannon as follows:

We were one of the latest detachments of the International Communist Opposition to take definite shape in the open just as the Lovestone group is somewhat belated reinforcement in the rear of the international right wing. Neither of these American factions, however, found its international connection by accident. We were "prepared by the past" for our place under the banner of the International Left Opposition. Lovestone and co. served their apprenticeship and became journeymen opportunists, qualified for union with Brandler in the American Party struggles. The protracted period of our gestation as a faction on the line of the Bolshevik-Leninists has not been without compensating advantages. The rich experiences of the international struggle were realized for us, as it were, in advance, and we have been able to build on their foundation.

— *Militant*, 10 May 1930³⁵⁶

And again, in the document against Weisbord:

Formally speaking, the American section of the International Left Opposition was formed a little more than two years ago. It began its public formal existence with the declaration read to the Political

Committee by Abern, Shachtman, and Cannon in October 1928. But neither the ideas of the Opposition nor we who represent them fell from the sky on that date. The whole situation is an outgrowth of the evolution and development of the Party and the Comintern. The founders of the American section of the Opposition were "prepared by the past" for their present stand. This is equally true of the Lovestone and Foster factions, that is, of the right wing and the centrists of our Party. Anyone who denies this has to ground his position on the theory that political groupings and political developments are accidental and arbitrary. Such methods of analysis never had any standing among Marxists.

— 23 December 1930³⁵⁷

The dispute over this standpoint, which makes a caricature of the origin of the American Opposition and sets up an absolutely untenable "theory of leadership" in this country, would have a purely historical and abstract interest, were it not for the fact that comrade Cannon, joined now by comrade Swabeck, has persistently put forward this idea for over two years, indicating that there is something more "actual" concealed behind this "historical question," something very practical, which, as will be seen further on, affects the present life of the Opposition.

Theoretically, the contention does not rest upon a shred of real evidence. The old Cannon group in the Party was not "developing logically," was not "gestating" toward the Left Opposition. It never had a firm programmatic foundation during its separate existence. It was never considered by anyone, least of all by itself, as situated at the left wing of the Party. It came into existence independently (following its break with the Foster faction, out of which it came in 1925), at the time when the Zinoviev-Stalin-Bukharin group was consummating its organizational-political victory in the United States by arbitrarily overthrowing the Foster regime and establishing the Lovestone-Pepper regime. The Cannon group united with the right wing (Lovestone, etc.) against the Foster group. When it finally broke its alliance with the right wing, it again maintained an independent existence for a while, essentially as a buffer between Foster and Lovestone. Prior to the Sixth Congress it formed an opposition bloc with Foster-Bittelman which it maintained virtually till the eve of our expulsion.

An objective estimation of the contending groups at that time would undoubtedly establish the fact that the Cannon group had many positive qualities, outstanding among them being its gener-

ally correct views on trade-union politics and its criticisms of the prevailing policies. But this by itself does not identify a group with the Left Opposition. We have pointed out on numerous occasions that even right-wing groups frequently make very just criticisms of the official line on such questions as trade-union policy. But it would further be established that on every fundamental question of principle, the Cannon group stood upon the platform of international Stalinism, sometimes a little to the right of it, sometimes a little to the left of it. While very few of its leaders—to their credit—ever engaged actively in the campaign against “Trotskyism,” the group nevertheless had no political affinity with the Left Opposition. If anything, it was the least “international” of all the Party groups and concerned itself less than any others with such questions as the British general strike and the Anglo-Russian Committee, the Chinese revolution, or the struggles within the Russian party, although the interest of the other groups was purely factional. It spent more time upon secondary tactical questions in this country than upon a discussion of the theory of socialism in one country, upon which it did indeed spend no time at all. It is true that the bureaucratic suppression of the Opposition’s standpoint had its effect upon the Cannon group, but the principal material was available in the U.S. and in Moscow for those of the group representatives who visited it periodically and were interested in these fundamental disputes. Not only on the basic questions of international principled connotation did the Cannon group have not the slightest relationship with the views of the Left Opposition, but even on the basic analysis of the position of American imperialism in the world economy and politics, its stand was the direct opposite. The Cannon group stood on the platform of Bittelman (the “apex theory”), against which the Russian Opposition had been contending since 1925.³⁵⁸

Still more: To the extent that we have developed toward the full and basic views of the Left Opposition, we have had to break both politically and organizationally with the old Cannon group. In order to come to the Opposition, we had to break organizationally with the overwhelming majority of the members and leaders of the Cannon group, so that there are today in the Opposition a bare 24 or so members who formerly were supporters of the faction in the Party, i.e., an insignificant section of it. In order to develop our present position on so important a question as the

labor party, for example, we have had to relinquish entirely the standpoint of the Cannon group on this point, which constituted the core of its platform even after the formation of the Left Opposition, its basic premise and perspectives from which its tactical conclusions were derived. The theory of the “gestation” serves to make the past of the Cannon group, with which we have had to break in order to go forward, serve as a brake on our further development.

The Cannon group (or more accurately, a section of it) came to the Left Opposition by quite a different path than by a logical and consistent development of its own struggle in the American Party. If it was “prepared by the past,” then it is not in the sense that comrade Cannon makes use of this phrase from Trotsky—which is quoted as meaning that the Cannon group was prepared *by its own past*—but by the *past of the Russian Opposition*, in which our old Party group had absolutely no part, except insofar as we stood essentially on the platform of the right-center bloc. As comrade Trotsky himself wrote: “After five years of the struggle against the Russian Opposition, it required a journey of members of the Central Committee of the American Party, and even of its Political Bureau, to a congress in Moscow in order for the first time to find out what so-called ‘Trotskyism’ is.” What actually happened was that the impasse into which the Cannon group had been driven by the unprincipled faction struggle in the American Party, in which the Lovestone group attached itself to Bukharin and the Foster group to Stalin, began to make it clear to many of the comrades that the “American fight” was of second- and tenth-rate importance compared with the fundamental struggle going on in the international. We realized this very belatedly, only after the Sixth Congress, our realization being accelerated by the decomposition of the ruling right-center bloc, and it is incontestably to the credit of a section of the Cannon group that it took its stand unequivocally for the Russian Opposition, however tardily.

But this has nothing in common with comrade Cannon’s theory of the “gestation” or the implications contained in his assertion that the American Opposition was constituted “formally speaking” in October 1928, i.e., that it had really been moving in just that direction long before 1928. The reference to “accidents” and “arbitrariness” in the formation of political groups, and what “standing among Marxists” such methods of analysis may have,

simply does not fit into the picture at all and has nothing to do with the case. Paz always contended that his group had developed “logically” into the Left Opposition. Frey demands to this day that we recognize the “legitimacy” of his “gestation” from the early years of the corrupt Austrian faction fights to his present-day “adherence” to the Left Opposition. The Maslowists and Urbahns to a degree assiduously cultivate the legend of the “historic left.” Or to take a group which is far closer to us than any of those mentioned: What would we say if the comrades of the New Italian Opposition were to make the following claim (which of course they do not make):

Formally speaking, we joined the Left Opposition in 1930. But neither the ideas of the Opposition nor we who represent them fell from the sky on that date. We founders of the NOI were “prepared by the past.” Our whole struggle in the Party—our fight against the Bordigists included—led us logically and formally into the ranks of the International Left Opposition. There are no accidents in politics, as all Marxists know.

We would say in reply to this absurd play of words what the undersigned comrades have said to comrade Cannon for the past two years—without the slightest results. Through the pen of comrade Spector, we wrote more than two years ago:

None of the former Party groupings are any longer what they once were. Never was the Lovestone group such an undisguised and outspoken right wing. Never was there the clear and outspoken conscious left wing that the American Opposition constitutes today. The limits of the old unprincipled factionalism and intrigue had their rise in the Zinoviev-Bukharin and Stalin regimes. The American Opposition has in the short time of its existence achieved a great educational work for the movement that will sooner or later bear its fruit. For this the American Opposition recognizes its historic debt to the Russian Opposition.

—*Militant*, 26 April 1930

Finally, even at the Second National Conference, we were obliged to reject the Cannon theory by inserting a clause in our thesis which referred to the fact that “The Left Opposition, at its formative stage, leaned in the direction of this reformist perspective (i.e., the inevitability of a labor party), which constituted to a certain extent an uncritical carryover of the preceding struggle in the Party, prior to the time when the left wing took shape and was established as a *political grouping distinct from all the others in the movement*” (conference thesis, our emphasis).³⁵⁹ This moderate

formulation was finally adopted after the strong objections raised by comrade Cannon to the original formulation, which was even sharper and plainer.

We have not been unaware of the advantage accruing to the development of the American Left Opposition from the fact that it was founded by a compact group of leading comrades who had shared common views in the past, whose experience in the revolutionary movement and in the internal struggles proved to be of great value, and whose "habit of collaboration" for anywhere from five to eight years in the Party made for a certain stability in the organization. Indeed, we have pointed out these positive features on many occasions to various hypercritical critics who played no role at all in the Party, or else an abominable one.

Nor do we entertain the notion that the League is at present obliged to engage in a review of the history of the Party and an estimation of the contending factions in it in order to condemn or in general to make any particular appraisal of the Cannon group. That may safely be left to the coming historians of the movement and to a time when the past may be examined with greater objectivity.

At the same time, however, we have not been unmindful of the negative and dangerous aspects of the "gestation" theory and especially of its practical consequences. It had served to establish an atmosphere of "hereditary succession," so to speak, in the organization, to attach in the minds of the comrades a special privileged significance to those who once formed a part of the Cannon group in the Party. It was on the basis of the same theory that comrade Swabeck, when he came to the center early in 1931 as an "objective comrade who would help establish harmony in the committee," informed Glotzer that the basis for the establishment of unity in the committee was an acknowledgment of "Cannon as *the* leader of the League." However little we were concerned with Swabeck's ridiculous preoccupation as to who (if anybody!) should be "*the*" leader (and by "acknowledgment" at that!), we nevertheless respectfully declined comrade Swabeck's ingenious proposal.

The refusal of many of the New York branch members to swallow this theory and the critical attitude they have adopted toward comrade Cannon's unceasing references to the qualifications of the Cannon group *is not the last reason for the antagonism which he holds toward so many of the New York comrades.*

This theory, furthermore, has served as a distinct obstacle to the broadening of the National Committee. The idea of introducing new blood into the committee, of drawing in fresh elements and active workers particularly at the center, has never been approved by comrades Cannon and Swabeck—especially the former. When the committee (in 1930) was functioning only in the most desultory manner, not holding meetings for weeks, we proposed the co-optation (with voice but no vote) of three of the most active New York members: Basky, Hansen, and Lewit. Cannon opposed it bitterly. It was only done when the full National Committee voted unanimously for our proposal, all of them, that is, except Cannon. He continued to look with contempt upon these three active workers whom we sought to draw into the national work.

At the Second National Conference we witnessed another instance of the astounding situation—*almost unprecedented in the history of the revolutionary movement!*—where, after three whole years of our existence we finally took the “revolutionary step” of adding one solitary new member, Oehler, to the National Committee and advancing one alternate, Dunne, to the same rank. The committee remains composed to this day (with the exception, of course, of its members from Canada, where the Cannon group had no ramifications) only of former Cannon group members. Our proposal to enlarge the committee of seven (of whom only the resident handful ever really functioned as committee members) to the number of nine was only accepted grudgingly. Our further proposal to add one or two active militants to the committee resulted in that “open conflict at the Second National Conference over the election of the new NC” about which the C-S document becomes so indignant. This “incident” requires some elucidation since its real meaning has been distorted beyond recognition.

The Dispute at the Conference

Even prior to the conference we had already noted the tendencies to narrow still further the basis of the leadership. On the very eve of the conference, Cannon made an open threat about his intention to oppose Glotzer’s reelection to the committee. During the conference itself, Basky and then Swabeck presented us with a list of seven nominations which provided for the removal of another “recalcitrant” who does not have the “proper opinion”

of comrade Cannon; we refer to comrade Abern. We not only insisted upon including these two former members in the new committee and adding comrade Oehler (which was finally done), but also on adding another comrade, who, during his period of co-optation on the committee and as organizer of the New York branch, had given adequate proof of his fitness, which nobody challenged. That we had not the slightest intention of "strengthening our faction" on the committee as against "theirs" by this proposal is conclusively demonstrated by our added proposal that we were quite willing to increase the committee's size to eleven or 13 and fill out the positions with any available nominees proposed by comrade Cannon. That Lewit's fitness was never questioned is shown also by the fact that shortly after the conference he was put in charge of work among the Jewish workers and made editor of *Unser Kampf*. But at the conference, his nomination met with the most furious resistance, although it had been generally agreed months before then that he was a suitable candidate for the new committee! Why? Because, as we learn from their document, he was "one of those comrades who had not been able to distinguish between the tendency of the NC and the tendency of Carter and who, at the critical moment, concentrated his attacks on us." Is this true? In no way whatsoever!

Comrade Cannon here refers to the incident which took place in the New York branch on the eve of the conference. The branch had already signified its attitude toward Carter by voting against him as a delegate to the national conference. Not satisfied with this, comrade Cannon thereupon introduced a motion of his own, without previously consulting a single member of the NC, condemning Carter. "Comrade Shachtman sat silent during this discussion and did not vote on either of the resolutions." Cannon's indignation would sound less shallow if we did not recall how silent he sat when, in 1930, the National Committee was being violently attacked by the comrades he had incited.

However that may be, Cannon carefully refrains from quoting his motion which is hardly consistent with his present contentions. In it he proposed that the branch "likewise condemn the campaign against the National Committee conducted by comrade Friedman (Carter), his attempts to discredit it and undermine its authority and to create rivalries among its members who have defended a common political line." In his document of 22 March

1932, Cannon writes that “for the past year or so...between comrade Shachtman on the one side and the present writer on the other—there has been a slowly but steadily developing divergence over questions which we consider decisive for the future of the movement.” In other words, there has been in the National Committee a divergence over questions decisive for our future for more than a year. But six months ago, comrade Cannon proposed that we join him to condemn Carter for having announced that there *were* differences in the National Committee! We sat silent not out of support to Carter but because we did not want to precipitate a struggle by attacking Cannon’s motion as it deserved. The branch, together with us, separated itself *politically* with sufficient clearness by voting against Carter as a delegate; the same branch voted overwhelmingly against Cannon’s motion because the comrades felt that it was not only unjustified persecution of Carter but that it was hypocritical and untrue. Nobody was unaware of differences in the committee (although nobody had the faintest idea that it was over “international questions” until Cannon discovered it!) and nobody was therefore willing to condemn Carter for saying that there were differences.

For failing to support this arbitrary, untenable motion (which even comrade Swabeck swallowed very hard when he rose to speak of it), comrade Lewit was opposed as a member of the new committee. Perhaps an even greater “mistake” on his part was his failure not only to have been a member of the old Cannon group but in not recompensing for that by agreeing with the Swabeck formula for establishing the basis for unity in the NC.

The charge repeated now that Lewit was an opponent of the committee appears even more ridiculous in view of the elections to the branch executive committee (New York) following the conference, when Cannon made a speech in favor of Lewit being put onto the local committee so as to strengthen the hand and influence of the National Committee!

We would go still further and say that even had all the charges made by Cannon against Lewit, or any other comrade who was generally qualified for membership on the committee, held true, even if such a comrade held differing views on certain questions and was critical of any member of the committee or of the committee as a whole—even if this were so, we find in it no reason for opposing him as a member. *The Opposition has no need of such a*

spurious and strangulating "monolithism"; it will concur in it only to its own detriment. While it is true that the conference did not realize all that was involved, it nevertheless made a serious error in giving a majority vote against our proposal.

The National Committee, individually and as a whole, undoubtedly has a great deal to its credit for which it has no reason to apologize; but it has great and serious shortcomings which cannot be overcome merely by insisting that the membership "recognize and increase its authority"—this cannot and should not be done by resolutions and, in the first place, it cannot be done by the membership; that task devolves primarily upon the leadership itself, which cannot ask the membership to take anything for granted for tomorrow. The committee, the League as a whole, must make every effort to broaden the base of its leading committee, seek out and draw into its ranks additional forces. Such an extension of the ranks of the committee, the infiltration of new blood, will be an added assurance against any unnecessary exaggerations and magnifying of small disputes and an easier solution of large ones.

To sum up on this point: the "gestation" theory has no basis in objective facts. Its adoption by the League and continuous propagation can only result in the worst ideological confusion and mixing up of the history and ideas of the Left Opposition with those of a Party faction which stood on a different platform. It can only produce a distortion of our whole outlook. It can only become an increasingly large obstacle to the growth and expansion of the League and its leadership.

Hesitation to Advance—Proposals for Retreat

The characteristics of comrade Cannon's policy during the past period were not confined to him alone. Immediately upon his arrival in New York, comrade Swabeck associated himself with comrade Cannon on virtually every single question and action. For this unity in action there is no accidental political foundation. Our differences over the prospects and perspectives of the League with Cannon, prior to the arrival of Swabeck, were accentuated by the similarly conservative views advanced by the latter. Most of the forward steps that the League took in the past year at first encountered the reluctance, hesitation, or downright opposition of comrade Swabeck. We were compelled to resist this tendency

with the same vigor that marked our resistance to the tendency of Cannon previously. The launching of the Jewish semimonthly organ of the League was opposed by Swabeck, who kept urging that its appearance be postponed, that this was not yet the time for it, that the organization could not carry such "heavy burdens," etc., etc. The Greek paper of the League met with the same opposition on his part and to a certain extent on Cannon's part, the motivation for the objections being the same ones that had been drilled into our ears in the past period, in connection with every advance that came before the committee for discussion. When the proposal was placed before the committee to vote for the launching of *Young Spartacus* at an earlier date than that foreseen by the Second National Conference, comrade Swabeck opposed it so violently that in the heat of the dispute on the question in the committee, he even threatened to resign his post as secretary and "have someone else carry out the work" if the motion was carried. And finally, as is fairly well-known, while Glotzer and Shachtman were in Europe, a certain letdown in the organization produced such a pessimistic and hopeless feeling in comrade Swabeck that Cannon proposed to him and to other comrades in the office that he return to Chicago, find work there, and have the direction of the work at the center be undertaken by other leading comrades.

In a word, the committee functioned in a relatively normal manner, relatively free from friction and disagreements *whenever there was no difficulty encountered in pushing the League forward*. We had no quarrel with comrades Swabeck and Cannon when they concurred in any move that would extend the activity, influence, and ramifications of the Opposition in this country. But *whenever they hung back, wherever they hesitated or resisted a forward step, wherever they manifested their conservatism, sluggishness, and their interpretation of our "protracted perspective,"* we clashed in the leading committee. This unmistakable, fundamental fact stands out clearly from all the records of the whole past period. It cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand or by "explanatory" speeches.

The League is threatened at the present time with a renewal of the clashes that have marked the past period, only they are now more acute and menacing. With the claim that it is now inevitable (or is it also desirable?) that the League pass through a so-called "French period," comrade Cannon has announced in the committee his readiness to "retrench" all along the line so that we may be

stripped for action in an internal factional struggle. Some of these "retrenchments" have already been made and others are forecast for the immediate period. The theoretical journal which we planned, against which nobody raised any objections at the outset and the financial feasibility of which was not seriously called into question, had already been dropped indefinitely. On the grounds that the organization will be crippled during this "French period" (in which the "hard oppositionists" are to form under the banner of comrade Cannon), *these comrades have announced their readiness to push back Unser Kampf to monthly frequency or to suspension, to give up "if necessary" altogether the youth and the Greek-language paper, and reduce the Militant to a semimonthly.* We have no doubt that "arguments" will be advanced for these proposals, even more strongly than the arguments—of the same type and with the same "validity"—which were first advanced against launching the *Militant* and every other publication we now possess. But we do not believe these measures to be at all necessary or commanded by the situation. We have found in the past that our resources had not yet been tapped, at a time when we thought we had taken the "maximum." We still have resources today which can be tapped to make unnecessary these "retrenchments," particularly if the organization is not thrown into a demoralizing frenzy of distorted factional war.

The break in the continuity of the weekly publication of the *Militant*, that is, its suspension for a long period of time, was never really necessitated by reality. The organization has proved capable of maintaining even more than a weekly English paper, provided that the proper situation prevails in the leading body of the League. We challenged the need to suspend the weekly before and we deny any need to do it today, except a factional need, i.e., one that arose out of a factional struggle imposed upon the organization.

We do not share the perspective of comrades Cannon and Swabeck as manifested in the past and repeated in their present document and we cannot withdraw our criticism of it. Nevertheless, we believe that the possibilities for the unification of the League and its advancement still exist and we must not allow them to be destroyed for factional reasons. We cannot hope to change the personal relations of comrades involved by the adoption of a decree. But there still exists sufficient community of basic political views to make possible the collaboration required to continue the work of the Opposition. The task to be accomplished imme-

diately is to reestablish the unity of the committee and the League as a whole on this "minimum basis." The joint work in the future, the consideration of broad political problems that we must take up in increasing measure, the events themselves will reveal in time what is not yet fully ascertainable at the present moment: Either the present conflict is the result of personal antagonisms, petty frictions magnified by the circle atmosphere under which we still live in part, or inevitable secondary differences on questions of policy which have no fundamental importance or significance and can be straightened out in the course of the work. Or the present conflict bears concealed within itself *half-formed, still unclear, but nevertheless fundamental differences which only await further developments, a collision with an important political problem or problems, to appear in their full light and magnitude.* It cannot yet be said definitely and conclusively which of these alternatives is correct. *Time will offer the test and the test can best be made under the conditions of unity.*

Let us now take up the other points raised in the C-S document one by one and put them as they should be put, not on the basis of assertions which cannot be proved because no proof exists, but on the basis of facts and documents, that is, as they were and are in reality.

The International Questions

We have spoken of the attempt, impossible of success, to explain the conflict that has existed for years in our leading committee by a reference to "international questions" exclusively. In the first place, they do not even begin to explain the differences which have existed between Cannon and Swabeck on the one side, and at least two of the present signatories (Abern and Glotzer), for the document of C-S refers to the difference on international questions *only* with Shachtman. As for Shachtman's position on the present dispute in the French Ligue, he will make that fully clear in a separate statement devoted to that question. Suffice it to say here that Cannon has distorted this aspect of the dispute in the committee beyond recognition and exaggerated the differences all out of proportion to their real magnitude. That there have been differences in the committee is undeniable; we aim to put them as they really were, from the first day to the present.

It is no secret that comrade Cannon's interest in international

questions in general and in internal disputes of the Opposition abroad in particular has never been a deep or ardent one, except for the last few months when such an "interest" was required in the pursuit of factional aims. In reality, however, it was at no time more than very casual, formal, and superficial. One has but to read the complete files of the *Militant* to convince himself of the insignificant percentage of the sum total of all his literary contributions to our press that is devoted to or concerned with international problems in general. This too has its roots in the more distant past.

One has but to remember the spread-eagle speech made by him at the Second National Conference, when, in order to leave the impression that Shachtman was "concealing" some material on the Italian situation from the membership, he urged the comrades "to burn a fire" under the National Committee, if it fails to produce immediately after the conference all the documents of the Bordigist group, and its correspondence back and forth with comrade Trotsky, so that the comrades might know "what it is all about." This speech, the documents, the correspondence, as well as the motion made on the basis of the speech, were promptly forgotten by Cannon right after the conference and have not been heard of since.

When the first dispute arose in the French Ligue, Cannon showed his usual interest in the matter, that is, practically none at all. He was afforded the opportunity to express himself on the disputed issues when he wrote the foreword to "Communism and Syndicalism," in which we included comrade Trotsky's article against the right-wing leadership of the Ligue, an introduction to which comrade Trotsky looked forward. Comrade Shachtman, who, we learn, "did not even find it necessary to make the information about the development of struggles in the European sections available to the committee," nevertheless furnished comrade Cannon with detailed information about the then situation in the French trade unions, the various tendencies and groups, and particularly the internal situation in the Ligue, which had evoked the criticism of comrade Trotsky. He made this information available to comrade Cannon for the specific purpose of having it included in the introduction so that the readers of the pamphlet would understand what was involved and where we stood. The introduction, however, does not contain anything but the most formal

reference to the Trotsky article.³⁶⁰ We have no doubt that precisely in this matter did Cannon allow political considerations to be outweighed by “personal considerations” in the case of Rosmer—whose fate in the French Ligue Cannon continued to bemoan to Shachtman for months afterward as one of those “old revolutionists” whose place was being taken, shall we use one of comrade Cannon’s phrases?...by young upstarts.

During the whole course of the French (Naville) and German (Landau) disputes, *there was not a shadow of difference of opinion in the National Committee, in any action we took or failed to take.* In the whole arraignment of Shachtman, Cannon and Swabeck do not produce a single document, do not refer to a single record to substantiate their charges! *And that simply because none exist!* Private conversations were undoubtedly held during a certain period—only if their subject matter and tenor were accurately reported, they would not resemble the insinuations made by Cannon but something quite different!

We say: *Let a single document, a single motion, a single resolution, a single private letter—either to Naville, Landau, or to comrade Trotsky, or to anyone else—be produced to show when, where, and how Shachtman or any other committee member supported those elements (specifically Rosmer, Naville, Landau) against whom the international Opposition was conducting a struggle.*

No such thing can be produced; but other documents can be produced to show the contrary.

On 16 March 1931, our minutes read: “Motion by Shachtman that we endorse the co-optation of Frank in Naville’s place in the secretariat.”

On 27 April 1931, our minutes read:

Motion by Shachtman that we reject the proposal of the Italian left Prometeo group and its conception that the International Secretariat should be a mere “liaison” center between the national sections, and propose in its place that up until the time when the coming European conference will elect an even more authoritative executive body that we fully recognize the authority of the International Secretariat politically and organizationally.

The minutes continue:

In regard to the controversy in the German section and the letters on hand from comrade Trotsky as well as from Kurt Landau: Motion by Shachtman that we endorse the practical proposals of comrade

Trotsky contained in his letter entitled "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition" as a basis to approach a solution of this crisis. Further that we reserve a formulation of our opinion on the political and principled issues involved in the controversy until such time as we have had further opportunity for study. That we further protest against the organizational measures taken by the Berlin executive committee which are calculated not to bring closer the solution on the basis of a political discussion but artificially to anticipate the decision through what is at best premature organizational measures.

Both of these motions were carried *unanimously* without the slightest disagreement. This was the first motion ever presented in the committee to condemn the Landau group. Comrade Shachtman needed no enlightenment from comrades Cannon and Swabeck in order to present it. We were probably late in our actions on this point, as we undoubtedly were on virtually all the other international questions, and comrade Trotsky's criticism was quite valid on this score, even though distance did not make for promptness. But it was not Shachtman who was late; it was the committee as a whole, and the attempt now being made to crawl out of responsibility and leave it resting on the shoulders of one comrade is cheap and ridiculous. No other comrade made the proposals *before* Shachtman did, either on Naville or Landau or any other question. Not because of lack of material which was allegedly "monopolized" and not communicated by Shachtman, for especially on the Landau affair did the whole committee have at its direct disposal a tremendous number of documents in German (which Swabeck reads fluently), which were sent us directly from Turkey and Germany.

In their document, they write: "Even without comrade Trotsky's illuminating open letters it was sufficient for us to read a couple of the translated polemics of Landau and to take note of the ambiguous and shifty tactics of Naville in his struggle against the leadership of the French Ligue to get a definite impression of these people." Granted they were deeply solicitous and "did not wish to injure his (Shachtman's) standing with comrade Trotsky by the implication of a lack of confidence in him," and that for this touching reason they would not adopt motions against Shachtman on the international questions. Yet even this concern should not have prevented them, since they already had a "definite impression of these people," from at least once introducing a motion on the international disputes *before* Shachtman did, so that

the procrastination and sabotage now imputed to him might thus have been overcome.

Was there not sufficient material available for this to the whole committee? All the mail, the reports of the secretariat, the documents, were turned over to the League secretary. From the additional material available to Shachtman (press, letters, etc.), reports were adequately made to the committee and not a single comrade took exception to the views expressed in these reports. Not a single comrade even intimated that different views prevailed among us on the international disputes. On the contrary, without a single word of special instruction at any time, every single document we ever wrote was assigned to Shachtman to draw up and not one was ever revised. Nobody intimated (except long after the fact) that Shachtman was giving half-support or any other support to Naville or Landau. Thus the committee minutes of 12 June 1931 read as follows:

Complete report made by Shachtman of the developments of the International Left Opposition, including the present discussion and disputes within the sections of Germany and France.

Motion by Shachtman: 1. That an elaborate and extensive information and political bulletin on the situation in the International Left Opposition, embodying our conclusions, be prepared and sent to the membership as well as to the International Secretariat; 2. That an unsigned article on this question be published in the *Militant*. Both motions lost.

Motion by Glotzer: That a statement on the international situation embodying our conclusions be published in the *Militant* to be signed by the NC. Motion carried.

Motion by Swabeck: 1. That a letter be sent immediately to the International Secretariat on the situation in the international Opposition which is to give the line that our resolution will take; 2. That comrade Shachtman be commissioned to draft the resolution and that a subcommittee of three, including Shachtman, go over the draft prior to its being submitted to the NC. Both motions carried. Committee: Shachtman, Swabeck, and Cannon.³⁶¹

But the letters to Shachtman from comrade Trotsky which the former "regarded as a purely personal correspondence"? It is precisely at the committee meeting just mentioned that this matter was first raised. Shachtman had read to Swabeck and other committee members a letter from Trotsky in which he criticized Shachtman for his delay in taking a full position on the European disputes. Shachtman gave Swabeck the letter (as he had given most

of the other letters from Trotsky), but Swabeck proceeded to claim that it was an official communication to the League. To avoid such petty quarrels in the future, Shachtman moved: "That all letters to and from comrade Trotsky be handled by the secretary." The motion lost. It was only then that comrade Abern made the motion which Cannon and Swabeck now distort completely:

Motion by Abern: 1. That all letters from Trotsky or the International Secretariat addressed officially to the League be translated for all NC members; 2. That the secretary inform comrade Trotsky that he acts officially for the NC and ask him to address official communications to the League in care of the secretary; 3. That all members have the right to correspond personally with comrade Trotsky or any other comrade. All carried.

In moving that Trotsky be informed that official letters be addressed to the secretary and that all members have the right to correspond personally with comrade Trotsky or any other comrade, Abern was directing his proposal not against Shachtman but against Swabeck!

It is true that comrade Shachtman considered the letters addressed to him from Trotsky as personal letters (comrade Trotsky addressed his official letters specifically to the National Committee and they were immediately turned over as such). In one of his earliest letters on the dispute in the French Ligue, comrade Trotsky wrote to Shachtman: "This letter is intended for you personally, not because I have anything to conceal here but because the comrades who are not acquainted with the personal actors may not interpret the letter in the spirit in which it is written." In spite of this—and other references in other letters written later to the obviously personal character of these letters—comrade Shachtman without in any way feeling that "any confidences were being violated," *communicated the essence and most frequently the text of virtually every letter he received from comrade Trotsky to the members of the committee, including those letters in which comrade Trotsky criticized him explicitly, as is shown by the meeting of 12 June 1931.* Any other presentation of what happened on this point is detective-story writing, calculated to create an air of mystery and dark dealings on Shachtman's part and to provoke demagogic recriminations against him.

We reiterate that "Shachtman delayed in taking a position on the disputes in the European Opposition" *is just as true as is the statement that the committee as a whole delayed.* Until the conference,

nobody had the slightest word to say—either in the committee or in private conversations—concerning any “support” Shachtman was giving to Naville, Landau, or similar elements. Nobody proposed a single measure or a single motion before Shachtman did. In the June 1931 internal information bulletin of the German Opposition will be found Shachtman’s statement condemning Landau, written even before the official NC resolution to the same effect (adopted on Shachtman’s motion), which appears in the same number of the bulletin. Comrade Shachtman was unanimously charged with drawing up the resolution on the international question for the Second National Conference. When it was finished, not a single revision was made in it by anybody. Cannon did, it is true, propose the insertion of Naville’s name next to the part which condemns his tendency. He did not, as he so romantically describes it, write Naville’s name into the resolution on the linotype box, but while looking over the resolutions, he proposed to comrade Shachtman that Naville’s name be specifically mentioned. Shachtman replied that even though no national section had yet made a public condemnation of Naville—although all had of course taken a stand against him and his tendency—and even though he did not think that the American section should be the first one to take such a step, he had no particular objection to inserting Naville’s name, *especially since it is quite obvious from the text of the resolution that it was Naville who was being condemned*. This was all that took place around this incident which is now recounted with broad hints about its tremendous significance.

Comrade Shachtman, with whom differences “began” on international questions more than a year ago (!), was given the conference report on precisely that subject, as well as the instruction to make the preconference discussion report on this subject before the New York branch. Comrade Cannon now denounces the report somewhat more openly than he did in his muddy insinuations during the conference itself. In the first place, Cannon never heard the conference report of Shachtman. He was absent from the conference while it was delivered, just as he abstained from participation in any other phase of the conference. In the second place, if the conference report required the peculiar attack delivered against it by comrade Cannon, why had not a similar attack been made on the preconference report given before the New York branch by Shachtman, in the presence of all the

committee members, including Cannon and Swabeck? *The report to the branch was made from exactly the same outline, exactly the same notes, as the report to the conference, and delivered virtually in an identical time allotment and language, that is, they were almost word for word alike!* Nobody even hinted to Shachtman that his branch report had something wrong with it! How was it possible to pass over in tacit agreement a report delivered to the branch and to launch into a furious assault upon the identical report delivered to the conference, to attack it, not so much to dispose of Naville and Landau, but in order to make a violent attack upon Shachtman in the form of hints, insinuations, obscure references, and the like?

The answer does not lie in any "differences" that Cannon actually had with Shachtman over international questions; these were discovered after the fact. And what fact? The fact that Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer remained silent at the last preconference New York branch meeting when comrade Cannon introduced his amendment to condemn Carter. If any mistake was made on this occasion, it lay in not speaking to repudiate the amendment expressly. In any case, it is clear to us that the "international differences," which created such a depressing feeling among the conference delegates after Cannon's speech, were discovered only after we had refused to be a party to an amendment on Carter which was hypocritical and vindictive and which aimed to condemn a comrade for declaring that there were differences when there actually were differences. The present document of comrade Cannon is a crushing repudiation of his own amendment at that branch meeting.

The Question of the Youth in the League

We need not here take any "defense of Carterism," which is ascribed to us in the C-S document. In branch meeting after branch meeting in New York we have made clear our views of comrade Carter and anybody who may share his outlook. We required no instruction from comrades Cannon and Swabeck to make clear our position on this point, and we certainly did not require the approach and manner of dealing with this question which these two comrades introduced. What we have criticized in the attitude of Carter is his academic approach to questions, his hypercritical attitude toward the work of the League and the National Committee, his intellectualistic tendencies, as well as the tendency to

set up the younger and very inexperienced comrades as a sort of "control commission" over the National Committee.

We have not, however, at any time demanded of him or any other member that worshipful and uncritical attitude toward the National Committee which can only distort the relations between the leadership and the membership. We have exercised and will try to continue to exercise the greatest patience—not so much toward Carter but the youth in the Opposition as a whole, not seeking to command them (for we are only too well aware of our own deficiencies) but to enlighten them and assimilate them into the movement as a whole. We prefer a thousand times to lean backward when it is a question of the young members of the League, because, few as they are, they are our most precious capital. Not to yield to the youth—or any other opponent for that matter—on questions of principle, not to flatter the youth, but at the same time not to club the youth, particularly those who are carrying out their organizational work in the day-to-day activities. It is by such an attitude that we shall prevent the creation of artificial divisions between young and old.

The attitude of comrades Cannon and Swabeck has not served the purpose at all. They have no real understanding of the youth problem in the Communist movement. In the first place they have entertained the greatest doubts on the need of any special organizational forms for the youth, referring, as comrade Cannon did, to the absence of any special youth groups, branches, or sections in such movements as the IWW. They look down upon the youth with contempt and show no comradely attitude. They dismiss all the younger comrades who do not fall in line with their views with the designation of "young upstarts." Instead of working patiently together with the youth comrades, of enlightening them on their shortcomings and errors, their guildmaster's attitude only serves to provoke the youth into a worse position. Our refusal to endorse this ruinous policy toward the youth—not Carter alone, but the youth as a whole!—is immediately distorted into the ridiculous assertion that we are "forming a bloc" with the youth against the National Committee (we leave aside the gratuitous assumption that the NC is the same thing as Cannon and Swabeck). Our attitude toward the young comrades subjects us to the charge by Cannon and Swabeck that we are setting up the young against the old, that we want to replace the "older comrades" with the "younger

comrades"—a charge which does not improve with age and for which due credit should be given at least to its original propounders in the socialist movement.

The attitude of a Communist leadership toward the youth is one of the best criteria by which to judge it. The attitude of comrades Cannon and Swabeck is wrong and must be rejected. It is not based upon the realities of the situation, just as little as are the charges made against us. We have no "alliance" with the Carter "faction." At the same time, we are not at all impressed by comrade Cannon's fulminations against Carter in New York, particularly when we recall that Cannon and Swabeck worked together with precisely the same and far worse elements in the Toronto branch, drawing up "protocols" with them right after the second conference on their own initiative, directed against comrade Spector, and reported to the committee after the fact and without consultation with Spector or any other National Committee member. Cannon's negotiations with irresponsible Krehms, who represent nobody and never did, which has its reverse side in the support of Cannon by the Krehms, who would richly and really deserve all the strictures Cannon directs against Carter, does not harmonize very well with a consistent, sincere aim to rid the League of so-called "Carterism."³⁶²

The Question of the New York Branch

The question is directly connected with the problem of the New York branch. The uninterrupted series of attacks that Cannon and Swabeck have leveled upon the New York branch, the fantastic charges that it cannot do anything and does not do anything, have at their foundation mainly the fact that a great number of the most active New York militants do not show the "proper respect" for Cannon and Swabeck. The continuation of these baseless attacks can result only in demoralization and the widening of the gap between the branch and the committee, a particularly dangerous eventuality in view of the key significance of the New York branch.

The defects of the branch are undoubtedly numerous, and we have pointed them out no later and no less vigorously than anyone else. But at the same time it is evident that these defects have been wildly exaggerated and made to cover up the numerous positive sides of the branch. It will be impossible to remedy the

shortcomings unless the other aspects of the branch are understood and acknowledged and unless the rude attacks made upon it are brought to a halt, so that the shortcomings may be discussed objectively among the comrades and not in an atmosphere of provocation and recriminations.

The New York branch is our largest branch—larger than any other four branches in the country. Its social composition is overwhelmingly proletarian, although its contact with the trade unions and the mass organizations is considerably limited, as is the case almost everywhere in the League. It has the additional advantage of having a goodly percentage of young comrades in it and also a good percentage of female comrades. On the whole the branch is a sound organism which can yet be made far more productive than it is at the present moment, particularly when some windbags and do-nothings are prevented from hampering its work.

The political level of the branch is at least as high as that of any other branch of the League. Nowhere else has a branch been confronted with so many acute political problems and come out of the discussion so invariably correct in its overwhelming majority, an achievement in which the committee gave signal aid, to be sure. In the fights around Weisbord, Malkin, Rose, Field, in the preconference discussions, the branch had internal problems to solve which no other branch has yet had to meet. The branch is the financial mainstay of the organization. Out of its ranks came the editorial boards of all four of our journals, and particularly of *Unser Kampf*, *Young Spartacus*, and *Communistes*. It has the task of preparing these papers, of mailing them, and of doing—in general—practically all the technical work which devolves upon the branch at the center. The forums, mass meetings, street meetings, debates, etc., which are conducted by the branch exceed those of any other organ of the League. The branch, it is true, has the great advantage of the presence of most of the leading comrades in New York, and this has indubitably contributed to the progress that has been made. It is also true that considerably more and better activities could be organized by the branch. But one of the most effective methods that should and must be used to develop this activity of the branch, to make it more effective and efficient, is to cease carping, unjustified criticism of it which we condemn in those local comrades who direct it at the National Committee. Another method is to look first to the doorstep of the National

Committee itself before we proceed to launch into wild accusations and denunciations of the shortcomings of the branch. The local comrades will always, quite naturally, demand of the leading comrades who criticize them that they should first examine, frankly describe and acknowledge, and then set about remedying the defects of the National Committee itself. This is now one of the most important tasks of the League.

The National Committee must really review itself, study its shortcomings, set about seriously to eliminate them, and develop some of that necessary self-objectivity which has been so lacking, particularly in recent times. It will not adopt the ridiculous Molotovist philosophy implied in the Cannon-Swabeck document that because our relations with certain branches in the past have been correct, therefore our relations now and in the future are correct; because our actions on various individuals (e.g., Malkin, Carlson, etc.) have been correct in the past, therefore our actions now on other individuals and our actions in the future are guaranteed to be correct; because we are fighting bureaucratism in the Party, therefore there cannot develop any bureaucratism in our own ranks. By breaking down furthermore its own narrowness and limitedness, by broadening its own basis, by a more patient attitude toward its critics in the League, particularly those who have no principled differences with the Opposition, by taking care not to exaggerate differences or to inflate small disputes into large "principled" disputes, the NC will be in a far better position to overcome its own false tendencies and shortcomings and to proceed against such as exist in the League as a whole.

The National Committee cannot, must not, set up an abstract and false conception of the relations of the leadership to the membership, for this can only serve to the detriment of the really Bolshevik idea of the signal importance of the role and function of leadership in the movement. Leadership is not established by appointment or decree, by "acknowledgment," but in the course of the struggle which alone makes possible the definitive selection of the cadres. "Anti-leadership" tendencies frequently arise when the attempt is made to set up an erroneous conception of leadership, and this is what should be guarded against. We have in our midst a tendency which seeks to have the "authority and prestige" of the NC "recognized" by resolutions and motions. Comrades Cannon and Swabeck never weary of repeating the need

for such actions. On every occasion, resolutions "acknowledging" the authority and prestige are put forward, as if without these motions the committee's authority and prestige would in some way be injured or else would not be sufficiently impressed upon the minds of the membership. What is even more detrimental to the League is the fact that these motions are rarely, if ever (we strive to recall an instance), accompanied by a critical examination of the work and activities of the committee itself. While it is true that some of the criticism has been baseless or exaggerated, nevertheless criticism of the committee in general has encountered a hostile rebuff or else been met with the type of motions we speak of above. If an error has been made, it has not been on the side of accepting criticism or making it ourselves; the error has been almost entirely on the side of resisting criticism and failing to make it ourselves, although nobody can fail to see the shortcomings and defects in our work.

The strength of the Opposition must lie in an independent and critical attitude of its membership, which selects, checks, and controls its leadership, which educates its leaders and by the confidence it gains from their activities and the successful results of their policies and conduct—not by the confidence it acknowledges in resolutions presented to it—slowly raises these leaders to the position they occupy. Only the absurdly self-contented can assert that this has been the case in our League. We have no grounds for entertaining any illusions concerning the present relations between the committee and the ranks. These relations leave much room for improvement. So does the condition of the committee itself, as a whole and individually. Above all, it must still be borne in mind that "the real testing of the cadres is still ahead." The League will meet this real test and pass it if its National Committee understands that the responsibility for the problems sketched above devolves primarily and predominantly upon the leading cadre.

The Controversy Over Engels' Introduction

We shall not venture here to argue questions of Marxism and dialectics with comrade Cannon, whose mastery in these fields is fairly well-known. What is essential in the dispute has already been set out by comrade Shachtman in his statement to the committee. The reply of Cannon and Swabek carefully walks around the

whole question and falsifies the dispute. Quotations are smeared around profusely. Carter, Shachtman, Bernstein, Kautsky, the Socialist Labor Party, and the social democracy in general are buffeted about and finally thrown into one pot. The kernel of the dispute remains untouched at bottom. Let us recapitulate a few of the essential points of the dispute:

1. Engels says explicitly, so that those who read may understand, that certain tactics advocated by Marx and himself in the *Communist Manifesto* are antiquated, obsolete, outlived. He refers to barricade fighting, the changed relations between legal and illegal action, etc., etc. He specifically advocates a *change* in the tactics of the social democracy. Swabeck specifically denied that he advocated this change.

2. The revisionists falsified Engels' views to make it appear that he was "a peaceful worshiper of legality at all costs." *This falsification was known to the Marxists long before Ryazanov's revelations.* The SLP "interprets" Engels' introduction in their own specifically revisionist manner. The Marxists also "interpreted" Engels in the sense Engels meant to be understood, that is, in a revolutionary sense. Cannon's belabored sarcasm about "interpretation" simply misses the point entirely. Marx once wrote that hatred of the Russians was and is the first revolutionary passion of the Germans, that the revolution could be guaranteed only by the most determined terrorism against the Slavic peoples. The German social patriots "interpreted" this to justify the vote for the Kaiser's war credits just as they "interpreted" scores of other sentences from Marx's works. The genuine Marxists never found this a great obstacle in their ranks. As has been shown by several quotations from Lenin, Zinoviev, Kautsky before the war, Luxemburg, and Trotsky, they did not require the Ryazanov article in order to combat Bernsteinism and SLPism.

3. How does Swabeck proceed from revisionist premises? His view in essence is that it is the Ryazanov revelations which first show that the Bernsteinian SLPist conceptions of Engels' introduction is false. If his arguments mean anything, they mean that *without the deleted passages in the introduction the revisionists would be justified in making their interpretation.* We contend that the Ryazanov discovery is only *corroboratory* and does not change the essence of what Engels writes. Whose view harmonizes with that of Ryazanov—

Cannon's and Swabeck's or the one we present? Let the editorial board of *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus* speak, as they do in the footnotes to the article by comrade Ryazanov in which he prints his discoveries:

Even without a knowledge of the deleted passages adduced here for the first time by comrade Ryazanov, it was still sufficiently well-known that the Engels introduction was made public by Bernstein in a chopped-up, falsified form. Even without the "philological" discovery of the falsification it was clear that the Engels introduction aimed at no "elimination of the Marxian tactic," for it dealt—as Rosa Luxemburg wrote—"not with the question of the final conquest of the political power but of the present daily struggle, not of the attitude of the proletariat toward the capitalist state at the moment of the seizure of the state power, but of its attitude within the framework of the capitalist state," which is clear from every line of the foreword. (Compare Rosa Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution?", Leipzig, Vulkan-Verlag, 1919)—The Editorial Board

It was clear from every line of the foreword, even without knowing the deleted passages, even without the *philological* discovery. In making this observation, the editorial board could never have had Swabeck or Cannon in mind, who deal with precisely this point by means of sophistries; of scoring points in the courtroom style, by comparing the shades of opinions that existed among the Marxists on this question; of doing anything but taking up the core of the dispute.

Marx declared at one time that the proletariat might take power in England, Holland, and America by *peaceful and legal* means, even though there would be a slaveholders' counterrevolution. Were there grounds for this belief at that time? Yes. The SLP and revisionists generally say it still holds good today. We Marxists "interpret" this belief differently today. Today there are no grounds whatsoever for this belief. Engels declared that the barricade and other tactics of the revolution of 1848 no longer applied to Germany in 1895. Was he right then? We believe he was. He advocated a change in the tactics of the proletarian party, only for Germany, with reservations, but nevertheless a change. To deny this as Swabeck tries to do is only to play into the hands of the revisionists. "There are only too many," wrote Engels to Victor Adler on 30 August 1895, "who for the sake of convenience and to avoid worrying their brains, would like to adopt for all eternity the tactics that are suitable for the moment. We do not make our tactics out of nothing, but out of the changing circumstances; in

our present situation we must only too frequently let our opponents dictate our tactics." The revisionists want to apply the Marxian tactic of 1895 to 1932, and that in a falsified, emasculated, anti-Marxian sense. Swabeck argued that the tactics of 1848 and 1895 were conceived by Engels as the same thing, that there was no change in them. That is the point.

Are barricade tactics and other tactics advocated in the *Manifesto* applicable today? They are, not in the same form as in 1848, but in a different form, the possibility for the development of which Engels did not exclude. Is it necessary to change the view held by Engels in 1895? Quite necessary. Both Kautsky and Lenin undertook to make this change more than 20 years ago. This is the only way to approach the philosophy of Marxism, just as Marx approached other political and economic problems: dialectically. We are ready to take lessons in the dialectic from Cannon, but not many.

4. The method pursued by Swabeck in attacking Carter, the tone of his article, remain unpardonable. It is on a par with his whole approach to the youth. Let us assume for the moment that all the defects which Carter is accused of having actually exist. This could not be a reason, to our mind, to proceed against him in the manner used by Swabeck. The latter's procedure followed the general theory that since Carter is what he is, then it doesn't matter how he is answered: rudely, with a club, by violation of agreements made on the matter, etc., etc. We cannot share the slightest responsibility for such a procedure.

How should the discussion on this question have proceeded? In the manner we have repeatedly advocated. Presented with a historico-theoretical dispute, the main concern of all the comrades should have been to put the issue in such a manner as to extract the maximum educational value from a discussion of it. Swabeck and Cannon, however, were far too concerned with smashing an opponent in the League to adopt this course. Instead of a discussion which should concern itself with the question of what Engels' views in 1895 actually were, they wanted and still want this historical question to be discussed in direct connection with "Carterism" and with the disputes in the National Committee on all the questions that have been raised. In this manner, no educational value can be extracted from the discussion. The form of the dispute should have been divorced from the content. They pro-

pose not only to combine the two but to add to them every other conceivable dispute in the organization.

In conclusion, some observations on how the present discussion was precipitated. It is quite correct that so sharp a dispute in the National Committee could not have been produced by a difference of opinion on the Engels introduction. Nor was it produced thereby. The facts are as follows:

The publication of the two articles which involved the editorial board of *Young Spartacus* made necessary a discussion at the NC with the representatives of the youth present (Carter and Ray). Cannon made the unprecedented proposal (unique in the movement to our knowledge) that these comrades be excluded from the committee meeting which was to discuss a question in which they and their views were directly involved. We insisted on their being present, particularly since they were members of a subcommittee of the National Committee. Had we excluded them during the discussion of their "case" we should have acted like bureaucrats. The committee members expressed their varying opinions. In the course of the discussion, comrade Cannon repeated in a more definite form the insinuations and accusations which had been gossiped about in hallways and cafés by him and his friends for the past few months: Shachtman is another Landau, another Naville, etc., etc. The writing down of his view on the Engels dispute, necessitated by the discussion in the committee, was therefore concluded by comrade Shachtman with his remarks on these repeated insinuations, remarks provoked by Cannon and Swabek, and appended to the statement of comrade Shachtman with the expectation that this would finally compel both Cannon and Swabek to put down their innuendoes, hints, and covert accusations in black and white, where some responsibility might be taken for them formally instead of continuing with a whispering campaign. The statement of comrade Shachtman was intended as his point of view for the National Committee and not for the purpose of opening up a discussion in the League on the basis of it.

The "reply" of comrades Swabek and Cannon, on the contrary, using the Shachtman statement as an awaited pretext, was intended as a platform on which the League was to be thrown immediately into a factional war. So impatient were these two comrades to launch their offensive with a split as their objective, that they even set themselves against first calling a plenary session of

the full National Committee to discuss the situation before a general discussion. They voted against Shachtman's motion for a plenum and the present document is being submitted for the consideration of the full National Committee gathered at this plenum because Cannon's and Swabeck's views on the need of holding such a meeting were rejected by all the out-of-town members of the committee.

To all the members of the committee we wish to express our conviction openly, bluntly, without diplomatizing or mincing words. We are not at all unaware of Cannon's intentions in the present internal struggle. His actions in the New York branch and in the National Committee during the few weeks prior to the holding of the plenum have revealed them plainly, if they ever were obscure. Cannon aims at ridding himself of embarrassing criticism and critics, primarily of the undersigned and those who may in any way share their views in the organization as a whole. Cannon is not now deeply concerned with the "international questions," any more than he was in the past, except to the extent that they may serve a factional end. His "plan of campaign," too, is quite obvious. As it unfolds, it will look very much like the following scheme:

Shachtman is a Naville or a Navillist. Abern, Glotzer, and Spector pretend to be against Naville, Landau, Felix, etc., but the fact that they are associated with Shachtman shows how unprincipled they are: In reality, they are in a bloc with this Navillist against the revolutionary elements in the League (i.e., against Cannon, Swabeck, Stamm, and Gordon). To strengthen this structure, these four will be accused of being "abstentionists criticizing from the sidelines," for has not comrade Trotsky criticized Naville in the same manner and demanded that he roll up his sleeves and get to work instead of playing petty politics? Then, to complete the picture and make the analogy with France even more perfect, he will add to this unprincipled alliance a "Jewish Group" (Cannon has already hinted more than once about his "differences" with the comrades who are working on *Unser Kampf*, about "federation tendencies" and the "Jewish Group," etc.). Then we shall have all the ingredients prepared for serving up to the American League and the international Opposition a "French period" in the United States, garnished with all sorts of "retrenchments," factionalism, confusion, and the like.

This, in outline, is the plan of Cannon and Swabeck. We have

encountered such construction before, but not in the Left Opposition. In the course of the Russian Party struggle, such affairs were known as “amalgams” and we shall, it goes without saying, resist them in the League with all our strength.

We put the issue sharply but accurately, because there is no other way of arriving at a good solution. Soft words, rounded corners, diplomatic language, mental reservations, all these will only make matters worse in reality, particularly in the long run. We want our position to be stated as we really believe it to be, as we express it among ourselves, with as little circumlocution and evasion as possible.

At the present time we want to underline our belief that measures can still be taken to prevent a destructive factional struggle. What we have said above concerning the possibilities of a “minimum collaboration and unity,” and our desire *to allow the passage of time and events to test out clearly and to the end any deeper political and principled differences that may exist in embryonic form today* should be borne in mind.

An effective functioning of the League, as recent experiences show us, cannot be accomplished by concealing differences, by hushing them up, by prohibiting discussion. The League and its leadership will in reality function best and on the soundest foundation, if disputes and differences are discussed with the utmost frankness, with the least amount of worry as to the temporary advantages that our enemies may seek to gain from them, and above all, by discussing the differences loyally, i.e., by presenting only differences that actually exist and not manufactured differences, and furthermore by presenting the differences *as* they actually exist and not in a distorted form.

It is manifest that our organization cannot escape from those crises which inevitably confront the Communist movement, particularly when it is tiny and isolated from the masses. The crisis can be minimized if we act in a responsible, sober manner, so that when the discussion has come to a conclusion, the League shall be in a position to advance with greater clarity concerning its problems, with greater knowledge of how to solve them, and with a firmer determination to reach the solution.

Minutes of the Plenum

CLA National Committee

10-13 June 1932

These minutes were published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 1 (undated). Resolutions on the Toronto and New York branches, written by the resident committee after the plenum on the basis of the plenum discussion, are omitted here.

Secretary called plenum to order, proposing the following agenda:

1. Organization of the plenum
2. Consideration of the controversy within the resident committee
3. Consideration of resolutions and organization question
4. The situation in the Toronto branch

Agenda accepted as proposed and comrade Skoglund elected chairman. Swabeck reported proposal by resident committee to invite one representative of the Jewish fraction committee, one of the Greek fraction committee, and one of the youth, together with comrade Gordon, managing editor of the *Militant*, to participate in the plenum. Swabeck moved that in addition the following comrades be invited: Tom Stamm, business manager of the *Militant*; George Clarke, field organizer; Louis Basky, formerly co-opted member of the National Committee; Herbert Capelis, secretary of the New York branch; and Carl Cowl, secretary of the Minneapolis branch. —Motion carried unanimously

Motion by Swabeck: That the comrades who are invited participate in the plenum with the right to speak only when called upon by the committee.

Amendment by Shachtman: That the invited comrades shall have the right to speak on such questions as concern their particular position.

Substitute motion by Cannon: That only members and alternates of the National Committee participate in the discussion of the main

questions, that after that is disposed of, if any of the invited comrades desire the floor, the matter be taken up for decision.

—Substitute motion carried 5 to 4, disposing of the motion and amendment

Swabeck reported request by the New York branch executive committee that it be permitted to be present at the plenum if the New York branch is a special point on the agenda. (In view of the fact that the New York branch was not a special point on the agenda, that was accepted as disposing of the request.)

Motion by Swabeck: That the second point on the agenda be opened by a report by the secretary on the organization, the origin, and status of the controversy. —Motion carried unanimously

Motion by Cannon: That following the report of the secretary there be a report by the comrades who have been abroad, comrades Shachtman and Glotzer. —Motion carried unanimously

Report made by the secretary on the main question on the agenda, the organization status and a review of the controversy within the resident committee, after which adjournment was taken until the next morning.

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Upon convening on Saturday morning, reports were made by comrades Glotzer and Shachtman on their visit to the European sections and comrade Glotzer's visit to comrade Trotsky.

After these three reports, discussion opened, embracing the general issues of controversy within the resident committee, the situation within the International Left Opposition, and the attitude toward the Carter group tendency.

During the close of the discussion, comrade Spector explained the reasons for not having voted on the drafts presented for resolution on the international question of the National Committee because of not having considered either draft fully adequate. He thereupon introduced the following resolution:

Resolution on the International Question

1. The second plenary session of the National Committee of the Communist League of America completely endorses the

analysis, the proposals, and perspectives for the International Left Opposition contained in the letter of comrade Trotsky (dated 22 December 1931) addressed to all national sections.

2. The world crisis, which has been developing in intensity for the past three years, has created most favorable objective conditions for the conquest of the decisive masses for Communism. Nevertheless it has become increasingly manifest that the Comintern under the Stalin regime is incapable of utilizing the crisis for the realization of the historical tasks of the proletariat. Stalinism continues to be an organizer only of defeats. In Spain the devastating effects of the centrist policy were manifested by the absence of a real Communist party in the revolutionary crisis, in the failure to give a Marxist appraisal of the class relations, and the consequent stabilization for a certain time of a Kerenskiad. In Germany, the key to the international situation, the great social and political contradictions create the basis for a successful struggle for power by the Communist Party, but the centrist regime, by a false theory of social fascism, its suppression of Bolshevik party democracy, the negation of the united-front policy, succeeds only in frustrating itself. In France, despite the economic crisis which has set in, the Communist Party failed to register any substantial gains in the last election and the membership of the CGTU continues to decline.

3. The mistakes, setbacks, and defeats of the Communist movement in general react unfavorably for the growth of the Left Opposition itself. The defeat of the Opposition in the first place was due to the defeats of the revolutionary proletariat and the stabilization of capitalism. The strengthening of the Opposition and the victory of its international platform is bound up with the development of a new wave of revolutionary struggle. But in order to take advantage of such a situation it is necessary for the Opposition itself to measure up to its gigantic historical mission. It must be completely recognized that in addition to the general and objective reasons for the slow growth of the Opposition, there remain the extremely important subjective and specific reasons. These are to be sought in the fact that there have existed in the Left Opposition alien tendencies which covered themselves with its banner, only to compromise and discredit it and to delay the formation of the genuine revolutionary cadres of the Opposition

which the crisis in the Communist International has brought forward as the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat. The work of purging the Left Opposition of these alien tendencies (Landau, Naville, Rosmer, and similar elements) was correct and fruitful; the completion of this task in the shortest possible time is an imperative need of the moment and can be accomplished not merely by the efforts of each national section by itself but by the joint efforts and contributions of the whole international Left. This imposes upon the American Opposition the need for greater attention than ever to the problems of the international Opposition for a more alert and active participation in their solution.

4. The recent progress, growth of influence, and strength of the German Opposition was made possible not merely by the accentuation of the revolutionary crisis, but specifically by the liberation of the movement from the paralyzing effects of the regime of Landau, which substituted for the revolutionary principles of the Left Opposition a course of intrigue, clique politics, combinationism, and sterility.

In France, however, the process of clarification which was successfully completed in Germany assumes an unnecessarily protracted character. The circle spirit and syndicalistic course pursued under the Rosmer leadership were not liquidated with due rapidity and intransigence, owing to the confusion produced by the vacillations of the Jewish Group and comrade Mill, arising from their proposal for a bloc with Rosmer in struggle against the leadership of the French Ligue. This fed the petty-bourgeois tendency of the Naville group with fuel for continuation of the ambiguous and diplomatic maneuvers with which Naville covers up his community of interest with those who are openly fighting the International Left Opposition (Rosmer, Landau). We do not mean to identify the traditions and position of the Jewish Group with that of Naville, with which they have nothing in common. The attempt to do this, made by comrade Treint, stands in the way of a solution of the relations between the revolutionary proletarians in the Jewish Group and the leading kernel of the Ligue. Stripped of extraneous and secondary considerations, the essence of the struggle that has been going on inside both the French and German Opposition has been one of the revolutionary selection of the genuine Opposition cadre.

5. An obstacle in this struggle was the utilization of the International Secretariat by its former secretary, comrade Mill, in the interests of a faction fight against the leadership, not only of the French Ligue, but also of the other decisive national sections which supported it. The International Secretariat in Paris failed to give the necessary political or administrative guidance to our movement. The chief reason for the failure of the Paris secretariat lay in the fact that it was not responsible to sections of the Opposition. We fully endorse the proposals made by comrade Trotsky in his letter to the national sections for the reconstruction of the International Secretariat based upon the direct participation of representatives from the most important sections and responsible to them. The interests of such a secretariat would not be subserved by the proposal of the Spanish section to delegate to it comrade Mill, whose previous course unfits him for such representation and is moreover a blow at those national sections who have repudiated him.

6. We reject the proposal made to hold an international conference of the Left Opposition to which shall be admitted all and sundry grouplets merely upon the basis of their claims of adherence to the views of the Communist left. We are in full accord with the three proposals made on this question by comrade Gourov in his letter of 22 May 1932.³⁶³

7. This plenum of the National Committee of the Communist League considers it necessary to recognize the defects and shortcomings of the character of its previous collaboration with and participation in the collective life of the international Opposition. For this lag in its prompt reaction to the questions in dispute in the European sections, the difficulties of distance are responsible in no small measure. Nevertheless we must strive to overcome this handicap by the closest and most prompt collaboration and by making available as quickly as possible a thorough selection of material, primarily by the systematic and undelayed publication of the *International Bulletin* in English.

—Spector

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At the conclusion of Saturday's discussion, Swabek introduced the following motions:

1. The plenum reaffirms the National Committee resolution on the situation in the International Left Opposition.
2. The plenum requests comrades Abern and Glotzer to withdraw their resolution drafts from further discussion or consideration by the membership.
3. The plenum accepts the resolution on the international question presented by comrade Spector as a supplementary and further elaboration of the National Committee resolution already adopted.
4. The plenum requests comrade Shachtman to affirm that the misunderstandings which arose in regard to our attitude to the international questions were created by him and due to his position held at the time, a position which he has now changed.

Voting on motions:

No. 1: The National Committee resolution reaffirmed unanimously.

No. 2: Comrade Abern stated that, "Since in my opinion the original resolution drafts were basically alike, and since I am in full accord with comrade Spector's resolution and also accept the National Committee resolution, I am willing to withdraw my own draft." Comrade Glotzer stated that, "My view agrees with those of comrade Abern and I am also ready to withdraw my own draft."

No. 3: To accept comrade Spector's resolution as supplementary—carried unanimously.

No. 4: Comrade Shachtman stated in reply: "I am not ready to make such a statement, since I do not believe the misunderstandings were due to my position. I do agree, however, that my failure, since my return, to make myself clear, did give rise to misunderstandings."

Comrade Shachtman submitted the following statement of his position:

Statement on the International Question to the NC Plenum

Since my views on the disputes within the international Opposition, particularly in Europe, have been called into question and been the subject of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, it is necessary that in addition to what I have already recorded in motions in the National Committee, resolutions, and oral

presentation, I add the following supplementary summary of my standpoint.

1. The Left Opposition gained its greatest impetus in the past period by dissociating itself drastically from Urbahns, Paz, Souvarine, Van Overstraeten, Pollak, and their similars, who had nothing in common with the Left Opposition and served but to its discredit, but the process of a revolutionary selection did not end thereby; it has not yet come to an end.

2. The struggle which the revolutionary elements conducted against the sterile clique of Landau in Germany and Austria made possible the liberation of the German Opposition in its orientation toward the effective establishment of a genuine section of the international Left. It was only after ridding the German Opposition of the paralyzing influence of Landau's intrigues, unprincipled organizational machinations, and combinations that it was able to make the forward steps our brother section has now taken in Germany.

3. This purging of the Opposition had something of its counterpart in France, where it has been less effective because the process has been unduly protracted and impeded by the introduction of questions of second order. Here the initial demarcation from the semisyndicalists (Rosmer), intellectualist (old *Lutte des classes* group) elements, failed to deal conclusively with the remnants of the old petty-bourgeois circle spirit represented by Naville, the dabblers in revolutionary politics who sabotaged the insistent struggle conducted by the progressive kernel of the Opposition in France and Germany against the worn-out, conservative, paralyzing elements. The effective liquidation of this problem in France was impeded by the complications created by the oscillations and separatist tendencies of the Jewish Group, and by the transformation of the International Secretariat by its leading officer, Mill, from a guiding organ subordinate to the national sections and serving as an instrument to strengthen the revolutionary tendency into an obstacle to the accomplishment of these objects. Within this newly complicated situation, the Naville group was able to float on the surface for a longer period. The solution was further protracted by the "experiment in collaboration" of the leading kernel of the Ligue with the Treint group, which proved to be fruitless and increased the difficulties in achieving the desirable aim of drawing

into the work the best revolutionary proletarian forces among the Jewish and French comrades.

The proposals made by me in my Paris letter to comrade Trotsky looking toward a solution of the sharp situation in the Ligue were not based on fundamental considerations. I regard them as a casual, episodic opinion, which I now view as incorrect and superseded by what is said in the present statement.

4. The internal difficulties in our Spanish section are due in large measure to its delay in clearly defining itself from the right wing and a failure to participate as attentively as it should in the life of the European Opposition. The personal opinions entertained on this or that comrade cannot replace a political estimate of the selective process through which most of the European sections have passed in the recent period and which has resulted in a considerable clearing of the ground, particularly in France and Germany. The persistent support for Mill even after he had been repudiated by virtually all the other sections and the provocative nomination of Mill to the secretariat has compromised the Spanish section. The substitution of a personal campaign against Molinier instead of a political estimation of the Ligue's situation has had the same effect. I repudiate of course any association of my name with such a campaign.

5. The proposal of comrade Trotsky on the reconstitution of the secretariat must be endorsed. I need scarcely add that I have never and do not now support the absurd and sterile idea of the convocation of the international conference on a "broad basis" which would include "all groups" "claiming" to support the international Opposition and compel the Opposition to start all over again what it has already partially finished.

6. The laxity and delay shown in the past by the American Opposition in international questions can and should be overcome as much as possible, despite the difficulties of distance and language. These shortcomings, however, will not be effectively eliminated if the problems of the international, particularly the European Opposition, become a factional football in the League, utilized in such a manner as to prevent the genuine enlightenment of the membership.

—Shachtman

During the continuation of the discussion comrade Shachtman submitted the following resolution on the Carter group tendency:

Resolution on the Carter Group

1. Our attitude on comrade Carter and his "group" has been set forth briefly in our statement on the situation in the American Opposition. We reiterate it because of the extensive discussion which has taken place in the plenum on this point: The negative and harmful characteristics of these three or four comrades in question are their pedantic and academic approach to the problems of the League, a supercritical attitude toward the work of the organization and its leadership, intellectualist tendencies, and the tendency to set up the younger and less experienced comrades as a sort of control commission over the National Committee. They have a perniciously superior attitude toward the other youth comrades in the League and on the National Youth Committee and a decided underestimation of the leading cadres of the organization. Their persistent carping on numerous shortcomings and petty errors made in the League work and in its leading committee frequently causes them to overlook entirely the progress the organization has made in the past period. Against this bad influence exerted by these comrades, particularly upon the younger elements in the New York branch, we have always conducted sharp but comradely polemics so as to win over to maximum collaboration all those at first under their sway, without attempting to persecute them for their views or leave that impression. We believe that in so far as these comrades maintain their attitude, it is necessary to continue this enlightenment of the New York branch members in the future until such a tendency is eliminated.

2. At the same time, it is indisputable that these comrades have been loyal to the organization and in the very forefront of its activity. We do not attempt to challenge the fact that they have engaged in the Jimmy Higgins work of the branch, refusing no responsibilities, defending the organization, its line, and leadership before the workers. This makes it both possible and desirable that we continue to afford them all the opportunities for continuing this activity. Our attitude toward these comrades is defined in large measure—although we are far from drawing a strict analogy—by what comrades Trotsky writes in his recent remarks on the French Ligue:

With regard to certain "doubtful" groups or groups of an alien origin, no sufficiently consistent policy has been adopted which would begin by attempts of loyal collaboration to put the doubtful elements to the test and under the control of everybody's eyes, give them the possibility of correcting themselves or of discrediting themselves, and in the latter case conclude by eliminating them from the organization.

The Carter "group" is not of course to be identified with the Naville group, and we do not consider that, in spite of their attitude up to now, these comrades need in any way be submitted to such a campaign as artificially inflates their importance and significance—in any direction in the branch, in which they constitute an insignificant handful of the comrades.

We do not believe that such comrades should be pushed completely to the background and isolated from the work and activity they have been conducting up to now, by an arbitrary faction combination which eliminates them from committees on a faction basis. Members of the branch executive should be selected, in our opinion, on the basis of their qualifications and activities, since our political differences are not of so clearly defined and deep a nature as to require the choosing of lower committees along faction lines, particularly where the National Committee, being in New York, has the opportunity of intervening directly for the political line of the League. The New York committee should be selected on the basis of drawing into it new elements, more representative, so that the disproportionate influence exerted in it by the Carter "group" may be reduced to a minimum.

The National Committee does not wish to create the impression among the New York members that it is exaggerating this "group" of three or four people, inflating its importance, or persecuting it. At the same time it will jointly carry on a firm campaign against its harmful and sterile tendencies in order all the more easily to succeed in eliminating the influences exerted by these comrades upon the New York branch and in tightening its ranks for the line of the League.

—Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer

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Declaration made by Cannon in agreement with Swaback: "While we do not consider this resolution as meeting in every particular respect with our proposals in regard to the Carter group tendency, it nevertheless provides a basis for unanimity."

Comrade Swabeck reported that on behalf of comrade Cannon and himself, he had personally asked comrade Shachtman if he wished to withdraw the latest document introduced to the National Committee by himself, Abern, and Glotzer, entitled, "The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect." This question was put in view of the fact that the contents of this document, the charges made, and the issue raised, had not at all been discussed or dealt with at the plenum. Comrade Swabeck requested an answer from comrade Shachtman in regard to this, to which the reply was given that the comrades signing the document are not willing to withdraw it.

Comrade Cannon declared to the plenum:

I have not yet at all answered a single personal accusation made in this document. I refer particularly to the charges against myself and the issues raised in connection therewith. I am ready to make such an answer to every paragraph and every line and will expect the plenum to take a position on the document and that it also go to the membership for discussion. I propose that we now take a recess for the comrades to discuss the advisability of withdrawing the document and give a final answer.

After recess, comrade Shachtman announced the withdrawal of the document in the following statement:

Our original understanding of the proposal was that the first two documents were to be sent out to the membership without the presentation of our joint reply, signed by Abern, Glotzer, and myself. From the clarification made by comrades Cannon and Swabeck, we see that this impression was entirely unfounded.

Since comrades Cannon and Swabeck assert that if our document remains in the records, it will require a polemical reply and involve a struggle in the League, we have decided to withdraw our document from the records, without changing the opinions we expressed in it, but in the interests of unity and collaboration.

—Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer

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Motion by Cannon: That the comrades who have varying opinions on the question of Engels' introduction shall, for the coming discussion, draw up in an objective manner statements of their views on the political aspects of this question.

—Motion carried unanimously

Considering arrangements for a coming conference, the following views were expressed: Comrade Shachtman favored the

idea of not having a conference in the immediate future, believing that the plenum had already partly served to obviate this necessity. Cannon expressed agreement, provided steps could be taken now to reconstitute the resident committee in such a way that its majority reflects the views of the full committee, the opposite of which is now the case. He declared that it is self-evident that organizational provisions must be made to guarantee the execution of the views, sentiments, and shadings represented by the majority in the daily work. This could be accomplished by the method of co-optation to broaden the committee, such co-optation to be affirmed by the membership through a referendum. The only alternative, if this is not agreed to, would be the establishment of a smaller political committee out of the present resident committee membership. Cannon suggested the following: The majority propose to the minority of the plenum that, by agreement, a co-optation to the resident committee take place, for the reasons of broadening the committee, drawing in new elements and youth elements, as well as to bring the resident committee majority in harmony with the majority view of the plenum. Shachtman on behalf of the minority expressed disagreement with this proposal in the following statement:

Statement on the Proposal for Co-optation to the NC

We are against the proposal to add comrades Gordon and Basky to the National Committee with full voice and vote, and comrade Clarke as candidate, for the following reasons:

1. The plenum revealed that no fundamental political differences exist in the National Committee. On those questions which became a subject of dispute in the committee (international question and the "Carter group"), we were able to adopt a unanimous resolution and arrive at a virtually united standpoint. Such a situation does not warrant the artificial introduction of three comrades into the committee for the purpose of giving one side a factional organizational predominance over the other.
2. The selections are not made for the purpose of broadening the committee in general and drawing new elements into its work—a step which we have advocated and which the next national conference must certainly accomplish—but in order to guarantee an automatic and arbitrary factional majority in spite of the

nonexistence of any clear political differences in the committee and regardless of what questions may arise.

3. The introduction of the proposed comrades for the express purpose of guaranteeing a sure voting majority for one side under all circumstances will not serve to eliminate the friction in the National Committee, but only to perpetuate artificially a rigid line of faction division inside the leading committee.

4. The selections are not made upon the basis of merit, thus helping to enhance the authority and effectiveness of the committee, but along the lines of factional support, in one case requiring the suspension of the constitutional provision so seriously and correctly adopted by the last national conference.

5. Without making this proposal a subject for sharp factional dispute in the League, which is equally unwarranted by the substantial unity on questions on which the plenum adopted resolutions, we nevertheless wish to register our categorical opposition to it.

—Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer

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Motion by Cannon:

1. That for the reasons already given and after an exchange of opinion of the comrades, the plenum decides to co-opt onto the National Committee comrades Basky and Gordon as voting members and comrade Clarke as a candidate. This to be submitted to the membership for ratification; meanwhile, however, the comrades to function in this capacity immediately.

2. That we inform the membership of comrade Gordon's limitations on the constitutional requirement and ask for their ratification with full knowledge of this fact. (The constitutional requirement is "Article 9. Section 3—Members of the National Committee must have been active members of the Communist political movement for at least four years, at least two years of which have been in the Communist League at the time of election." Comrade Gordon's limitations in regard to the Constitution refer to the first part of this requirement. He has been only two years a member of the Communist League.)

Comrade Spector recorded himself as opposed to disregarding the constitutional provisions which we adopted after such serious reflections.

Voting on the motion for co-optation: In favor: Skoglund, Cannon, Swabeck, Dunne, Oehler. Voting against: Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer. Abstaining: Spector.

Voting on Gordon: In favor: Skoglund, Cannon, Swabeck, Dunne, Oehler. Against: Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer. Abstaining: Spector (referring to statement above).

Voting on members proposed for the committee: In favor of Basky: Cannon, Swabeck, Dunne, Skoglund, Oehler. Against: Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer. Abstaining: Spector.

Voting on Clarke: In favor: Skoglund, Cannon, Swabeck, Dunne, Oehler. Against: Shachtman, Abern, Glotzer. Abstaining: Spector.

Motion by Abern: That comrade Shachtman take up the post formerly occupied by him as editor of the *Militant*.

Motion by Swabeck: That the present arrangement stand. That comrade Cannon remain the politically responsible editor, that comrade Shachtman as a member of the editorial board collaborate fully in the editorial work of the *Militant* and the editorial board take charge more directly and assume more complete responsibility for the editorial work and the makeup of the *Militant*.

Voting on the motion: In favor of Abern's motion: Abern, Glotzer, Shachtman, Spector. In favor of Swabeck's motion: Cannon, Swabeck, Dunne, Skoglund, Oehler.

Statement by comrade Spector:

Does comrade Cannon still hold as valid his statement (at the committee meeting, January 13) when proposing comrade Shachtman that nobody has advanced any personal or political objections to Shachtman as editor of the *Militant* and comrade Trotsky's proposal that comrade Shachtman resume his post?

Reply by Cannon:

Yes, in general, I think it is still valid. After the agreement we have arrived at here, I would not raise any political or personal objections to comrade Shachtman. However, I am under the impression that all the circumstances are not exactly the same as they were five months ago. Since then we have organized the staff on a more collective basis, we have entrusted the responsibility of actually getting out the paper to comrade Gordon, and in my opinion he has carried out his responsibility very satisfactorily. I do not think we should return to the old method but rather should go forward toward a further development of the collective principle. I also think it

unwise to establish the idea that we call in comrades in responsible functions when we need them in an emergency and then dismiss them when the emergency is over.

Motion by Swabeck: 1. That the resident committee be authorized to finally elaborate the resolutions for which we have here drafts accepted as a basis, together with a resolution summarizing the work of the plenum as well as to prepare the material for the coming membership discussion. 2. That the secretary prepare a report of the plenum with the approval of the resident committee for the International Secretariat and comrade Trotsky.

—Motions carried unanimously

At the conclusion of this discussion the following statement was submitted to the plenum by comrade Carter:

We the undersigned, recognizing that one of the most important disputed questions in the National Committee and the plenum is the problem of the New York branch and the purported domination of its executive committee by the so-called Carter group, while decisively rejecting any charge of the existence of a political tendency called "Carterism," understand that the dissension on the question interferes with harmonious collaboration in the National Committee. We firmly believe that the utmost collaboration and collective leadership is a dire need in the National Committee and the League.

We believe that rather than permit the question of our reelections to the NY branch executive committee hinder the necessary collaboration in our National Committee and harmonious and comradely relations in the New York branch, we will, and at the present time wish to state so, not accept nominations for the coming elections to the New York executive committee.

We take this step for one reason—a sincere attempt to secure as much as possible united functioning of the entire organization and particularly its leading body, the National Committee. This does not mean that we will decrease our activity in the New York branch. On the contrary, we intend to continue our active functioning in the branch and the League as a whole.

—Stone, Ray, Carter

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The Situation in the Toronto Branch

Comrade Spector reported on MacDonald's adherence to the Left Opposition and on the controversy within the branch and

on proposals for the future. Comrade Krehm, who had been invited to the plenum for this particular discussion, presented the views of the other side of the controversy. Krehm proposed the following conditions to heal the breach with Spector and comrades who agreed with him: 1. A clear explanation from Spector on his position on the delegation to Premier Henry.³⁶⁴ 2. Repudiation by Spector on his position of his act in splitting the Toronto group.³⁶⁵ 3. Spector to enter a mass organization. 4. Spector to substantiate his accusations against other comrades by actual facts or else withdraw them.

Comrade Spector made the following proposals: 1. That the Canadian organization be established as an autonomous section of the Left Opposition, with a provisional center to be created. 2. That it establish direct relations with the International Secretariat and function under the name of Marxian-Leninist League of Canada (Opposition). 3. That it publish a monthly organ. 4. That it prepare a national platform. 5. That it share responsibility for the American League theoretical organ. 6. That for the time being the Toronto membership function in two branches on the basis of the present division.

After a discussion on the controversy and the various proposals Swabeck made the following motions:

1. That we make another effort for comradely collaboration without recrimination of the Toronto membership within one branch, including all of those who are now members.

2. That the National Committee supports fully the political tendency represented by comrade Spector and considers it as the basis for united collaboration.

3. The National Committee demands from the Toronto membership that this be adhered to on penalty of measures to be taken against those who fail.

4. That we accept as a perspective the proposals made by comrade Spector for an autonomous Canadian section of the Left Opposition in the sense that the first practical steps in that direction, such as the launching of a paper, establishment of an editorial board, etc., be taken as soon as the branch has reached a sufficient degree of collaboration and stability.

Motion by Cannon: That the resident committee be instructed to draw up a resolution which will elaborate on this basis.³⁶⁶

—Motions by Swabeck and Cannon carried unanimously, Spector adding that an elaborated resolution should include a characterization of the group.

Motion by Cannon: In view of further consideration by the comrades, the plenum decides that comrade Shachtman return to his post as editor of the *Militant*, with comrade Gordon remaining in his present position on the editorial staff.

—Motion carried unanimously

Motion by Glotzer: That consideration of the unemployment resolutions, together with organizational questions, and the question of Weisbord (since added to the agenda) be referred to the resident committee and plenum now adjourns.

—Motion unanimously carried



Some Considerations on the Results of the National Committee Plenum

[by the Shachtman Group]³⁶⁷

16 June 1932

*This document was drafted as a factional statement for supporters of Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer. It may have remained uncirculated.*³⁶⁸

Our aim: to bring into the open and then put a stop to the whispered campaign to discredit us, started at the last national conference, on the international disputes. At the same time, to record for the first time the manner in which the *real* disputes have been developing in the National Committee for the past three years and to state our position on them formally. The embryonic state of the differences would make an open struggle in the organization harmful. Only the future, the test of events and big questions, can reveal the import and depth of these differences and reveal where each comrade actually stands. Not sufficient has

yet happened for us to be able to establish the tendencies with conclusiveness, but only to indicate and warn against them.

The calling of the plenum: We insisted on the plenum so that the National Committee as a whole might act before a struggle is artificially precipitated in the organization as a whole on a false or an as yet unclear foundation. The responsible way is to attempt a solution in the leading organism before it is thrown into the ranks. That is what leaders are for. Cannon and Swabeck wanted to throw the discussion into the ranks forthwith, without a plenum, and with an immediate convention in which they wanted to gain a victory on the basis of their analysis of the questions at issue, i.e., international questions and "Carterism." Our fight for the plenum was completely successful and justified, and proved good for the organization.

We do not come out of the plenum weakened; the morale of our friends in the League is excellent. Their uncertainties are removed, they know what we are fighting for. Our opponents do not feel strengthened, but apologetic, at least on the reconstitution of the committee. Their campaign concerning the wide gap that separated them from us (particularly from Shachtman) on the international questions was revealed to be wildly exaggerated. The acceptance of the international resolution proposed by Spector and the resolution on Carter proposed by Shachtman (at least as an acceptable draft) proves our contention concerning their magnifying of differences on this score and their utilization of them to minimize or cover up other issues.

We withdrew our document from the records: 1. under the threat of a violent struggle in the League if we did not withdraw, which would not conform with our aim of averting a fight in the League under the circumstances; 2. because none of the documents are to be sent out to the membership anyway; 3. because it was a purely formal act: The *facts* on which our document is based cannot be "withdrawn" from the records. Our document replied to all their charges; they have not replied to our criticisms. They did not reply by one word in the discussions; they did not avail themselves of the opportunity to reply in any sort of written statement. Our withdrawal did, it is true, relieve C-S of the need of making a reply, which was impossible for them, at least a satisfactory reply.

For the first time, we put down in writing the history of the internal development of the American Opposition, as it actually happened, without exaggeration. Even in withdrawing it from the formal archives, we reasserted our agreement with every word in it. There are numerous precedents for similar actions, and we yielded nothing in principle when we acted as we did.

For the first time in a long period we acted and worked collectively, consulting not only with ourselves (the committee members), but also the active leading comrades from New York and out of town who were present. If the committee as a whole did this more frequently, it would not only function better but would have infinitely better relations with the ranks.

The greatest weakness of our position was our failure to act collectively for the whole period prior to the plenum. While all our leading comrades had a fundamentally similar position on the international questions, this was not reflected in their conduct. Shachtman's failure to establish his position clearly to the committee on this point when it first rose there, and later the separate resolutions of Abern and Glotzer, did great harm to our stand. It is particularly because C and S were working to misrepresent Shachtman's actual position that it was imperatively incumbent upon the latter to record himself immediately for what he advocated and to communicate his position internationally. The failure to do this created great confusion not only in our own ranks but in the organization, and enabled Cannon and Swabeck to utilize it to more than the maximum in distorting the dispute. Without overcoming this difficulty we shall not advance very far in the future.

This is one of the reasons for the superior preparation of our opponents and the fact that we improvised to such a large extent during the plenum. On the other hand, we did not have full command of our resources and were far from bringing them into fully effective play.

In spite of this, we all spoke and presented a fairly consistent common line, based on joint participation. Their faction was composed essentially of Cannon. Despite the presence of so many rank-and-file comrades, neither Dunne nor Skoglund spoke on a single question during the whole plenum called to settle the severest crisis in the League. Whatever they did in private consultations, they made not the slightest contribution to the problem in the plenum

itself. Oehler did not do much better. His remarks never touched the problems at any deeper point than their circumference. Their uncritical support inevitably produced their superficiality and sterility on the questions raised. Further, far from being objective and impartial, as they are said to be, they acted as agents for one faction. If there was any doubt on this score, it was set aside by their action on the editorship of the *Militant*, when they changed their position 180 degrees at the simple command of Cannon, after having argued "objectively" against it and without motivating their change by a word of explanation. These obvious facts cannot be washed away by the flattery and encomiums poured over them by Cannon, who does not present them as his faction comrades, but as the revolutionary cadre which came objectively to judge the situation and did judge it in his favor. With the exception of Oehler, it is clear that their views were entirely predetermined.

The presence of the Minneapolis comrades, with whom we consulted openly, was of great value to us. They were present, were able to see for themselves, and made it possible for an objective and not one-sided report to be presented in Chicago and Minneapolis. They showed that our resources are not confined to a few "malcontents" in New York. Their support for our views was "not accidental," for they have confronted on a local scale some of the identical problems which have necessitated that we take a position on a national scale. In a small way they showed that we have political grounds for our fight, that it is not some petty, base struggle of cliques for personal power, as some philistines and interested faction agents whisper it about.

On the international question: The greatest damage to the organization on this score was caused by C-S. Had they merely been interested in "correcting Shachtman," that would have been comparatively easy. They were interested in it for the factional capital it contained for use against us, and they worked it to the bottom. Damage of another sort was created by Shachtman's silence, but in no way warranted the falsified, factional struggle they had opened up long before that. We were thus compelled, in a sense, to fight on grounds laid by them, and not on the grounds laid by the whole situation in the past. In spite of this, the discussions proved how they had distorted, magnified, and falsified the dispute. They were compelled to deny the existence of a "Naville or Landau faction" or of an "American Naville-Landau." With the

presentation of Shachtman's statement of position and the adoption of Spector's resolution, the ground is laid for the complete elimination of this vital question from the realm of factional warfare, so that nobody can play with it any longer. We withdrew all the other international drafts and voted for Spector's resolution. We also voted for their resolution so as to eliminate to the maximum any grounds for the continuation of this false fight and relieve them of artificially manufactured weapons.

On Carter: Here, too, we burst a big bubble blown by them. It is we who had all along conducted the fight against Carter's unhealthy aspects, both in the branch and in the National Youth Committee. We conducted it properly, without exaggerations or persecutions. Cannon and Swabek were guilty of both and in actuality only emphasized the bad sides of the Carter group, provoking them into wrong positions, actions, and supercritical attitudes. The facts were too overwhelming in this case (as well as in the case of the New York branch as a whole) to enable Cannon to justify his wild assertions about an "opposition bloc." We justly refused the purely factional and arbitrary proposal of Cannon to unite to crush Carter organizationally, instead of allowing Carter the opportunity to find the right road in the process of the organization's work and policies. Carter took a step forward with his statement. We should help him along on this road and not allow Cannon's provocations and extreme exaggerations—based upon his subjective reaction to many of Carter's criticisms—to impede the work of clarifying the situation in the New York branch. Our resolution to the plenum lays the right basis for this work. Its acceptance was forced upon Cannon-Swabek by the unanswerable array of facts and our arguments and by our refusal to be bulldozed into magnifying "Carterism" into some terrific bogey to the League. One of the most positive phases of our fight on this question, and more than that on the question of the youth as a whole, was the quite obvious fact that such articles as Swabek's against Carter will henceforth be pondered over a hundred times before they see the light of day. Swabek and Cannon received a lesson on how to deal with the younger comrades. We are sure that our stubborn fight against their utterly false, journeyman's attitude toward the youth will check them in their haughty antagonism to the younger comrades, their open contempt toward them, their factional attitude of warm endorsement for those young com-

rades who (like Clarke) swallow their criticisms without great conviction and become their faction supporters.

On the co-optations: This was one of the biggest blunders made by Cannon during the plenum. We were justified a thousand times in refusing the unheard-of proposal that we join them in taking this step, that we voluntarily collaborate in "minoritizing" ourselves. 1. The co-optations show the level of their strength in the New York branch. 2. The co-optations serve to dilute the level of the committee as a whole, and dilute it unnecessarily. 3. The co-optations are an entirely factional step, motivated that way, and baseless on political grounds. If there are no deep political differences, there is no ground for giving one tendency an organizational faction predominance over the other. 4. It is not only a breach of the unified views on fundamental questions reached by the plenum, but will serve to perpetuate the faction lines now drawn in the committee, being public notice served that their faction must have a caucus majority regardless of the question at issue. If this step is taken under such circumstances, what organizational measures would they take if the differences were really deep and acute? 5. The co-optations were a factional payoff. 6. They were a caricature of the thoroughly correct idea advanced in our "rubbishy" document that the committee must be broadened and new blood drawn into it. We meant it to help solve the sharp internal situation, not to perpetuate it. We did not mean it for Gordons. 7. The individuals qualify for such a position only by a wide stretch of the imagination. In putting on Gordon, Cannon even violates the Constitution. We do not raise mere formal objections, which would not be valid were the situation to call for violating the form. But form has a tremendous importance and exists to be observed. The "four years in the Communist movement" provision was inserted quite solemnly. If it is to have "exceptions" whenever factional exigencies require them, then the provision is a sham and should be repealed. The National Committee is the leader in the organization. We were accused of wanting to tamper lightly with the leadership. Cannon proved by his own actions who is tampering, and doing it light-mindedly and factionally. 8. They fought violently against Lewit being put on the committee, but they put on Basky, Clarke, and Gordon. It is hard to imagine a more factional farce. Cannon has not yet understood the fight we made for Lewit at the conference; he still regards it as a personal incident.

For us it always had a purely political significance, which is revealed by the co-optations approved by the plenum. We refused to vote for these co-optations at the plenum. We do not propose to make a fight in the League against them, for it is not upon such questions that the already sufficiently tense situation can be precipitated into a factional war. At the same time, we cannot vote for the co-optations in the branches, any more than we did at the plenum. In a quiet, not sharp, not violent, not factional, but clear way, we shall record ourselves in the branches on this point.

The Engels controversy: The ridiculous suggestion that the committee register itself on the theoretico-historical dispute was not carried, following our protest. We will present our views on this controversy in an objective manner in debate with Swabeck, a debate freed of the other issues injected into the dispute by Swabeck and Cannon.

The Toronto branch: The outstanding result of this discussion was the motion proposed by Swabeck that the plenum inform the Toronto comrades that the National Committee endorses the political tendency of Spector, and that this is the basis for the reunification of the Toronto branch. But Spector shares the views of the rest of our comrades on every single important point. We are part and parcel of the "political tendency of Spector"; it is our political tendency. Spector spoke for us, in the name of our group, at the plenum, associating himself with us in the most unmistakable manner. How can they endorse "Spector's political tendency" and denounce ours, which is identical with it?

The gestation theory: For the first time this question was taken up openly and discussed objectively, at least on our side. Cannon and Swabeck continued their stubborn defense of it, indicating once more that behind their insistence is something deeper than a mere difference of view on a past historical question. Morgenstern showed some of the absurder aspects of this theory ("Wasn't the Cannon group right on the La Follette question and on the labor party?")³⁶⁹ and in his person revealed some of the patent dangers (confusion, total misunderstanding of the changes that have taken place in the position of the Left Opposition, faction-fetishism) contained in this false theory. The plenum has done everything but give us greater reason for changing our quite correct stand on this question. What we say about it in our document was never

even discussed by our opponents, and every word in our statement on this point retains its full validity.

Our task now: We have yielded nothing on our views; we have reaffirmed them. Much that happened even formally at the plenum confirmed our stand. We do not want a faction fight now. We prevented it by our whole recent conduct. The differences we have with Cannon-Swabeck are, it must be emphasized, quite clear in their purport and nature, but still embryonic in form. We are willing and desirous of letting the passage of time and the test of events tell how deep are the roots of the differences. In the coming days, we will do nothing to exaggerate these differences, to magnify them, to perpetuate them. If they persist in their course, they will only make a clarification inevitable, accompanied by the necessary struggle to have the League take a position one way or the other. At all times, however, we must not slacken our activities in the least, nor can our friends do anything of the sort. On the contrary, we must show (and not merely for the record) that we are the most energetic, consistent, and willing militants in the League, doing the maximum amount of work for the organization. Maximum collaboration to advance the League, minimum artificial friction, no yielding of our point of view. The stand we have taken and defended in the past makes us confident of the future.

The question of the editor of the *Militant*: The skirmish over this question was a revelation. In itself it presented a condensed picture of the whole fight and its meaning, in virtually all its aspects. After having made Shachtman's collaboration in such a vital post as difficult as they could, if not impossible, they conducted a violent campaign against him for refusing to resume the editorship. They protested their anxiety to have him take the post. They argued that they had neither personal nor political objections to him. But what happened at the plenum showed that their whole concern with this issue was factional and nothing else. They were quite prepared (after all they had campaigned about previously) to let the plenum go by without even raising the question! We finally raised it in a quiet but emphatic manner. They voted it down and presented the most demagogic arguments against it, but presented them very solemnly and "objectively"—not only Cannon and Swabeck, but Skoglund, Dunne, and Oehler. Only

after a short while, when the full realization of their indefensible and self-revelatory position dawned upon him, did Cannon take the position to reconsider. He did not motivate his reconsideration by a single word; he did not even attempt to give a reason for his change of front. A few minutes after having given very solemn arguments against Shachtman as editor, they turned about and voted just as solidly *for* Shachtman, also without giving the least reason for the change and only because Cannon gave the signal. On this whole point was shown the quite factional standpoint and conduct of all five comrades concerned.



Draft Statement to the Membership on the National Committee Plenum

by James P. Cannon³⁷⁰

25 June 1932

On June 25 the resident committee adopted this draft over the opposition of Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer, who submitted their own statement on the plenum at a subsequent meeting on July 7. Cannon wrote a new statement to the membership in response to the Shachtman group, presenting the plenum events in much starker factional terms.³⁷¹ This draft was attached to the resident committee minutes of June 25, but it was never published in a CLA bulletin.

In a previous circular from the national office the branches were informed that disputes had arisen within the resident committee which would be considered by a full plenum of the National Committee and then referred to the membership. The plenum was held on June 10-13. The two important concrete questions of dispute, which required definite decisions in the form of resolutions, were the following:

1. The situation in the International Left Opposition
2. The situation in the New York branch

The resolutions on those questions were finally adopted by unanimous vote. There have been no disputes in the committee

over general questions of the League policy; the entire NC stands as before on the basis of the Second National Conference thesis and resolutions.

In view of this fundamental political solidarity and the agreement now arrived at on the disputed questions referred to above, it is clear that a factional struggle in the League can in no way be justified or tolerated. The plenum adjourned with this precise understanding, with organizational measures to reinforce it, and with an agreement on both sides to reestablish a collaboration of all forces for united work on the basis of the plenum decisions. It was then decided, in lieu of a conference, to arrange an objective discussion of the plenum results in the branches, to submit the decisions to a referendum vote of the membership, and to concentrate the activity of the entire organization on a new program of expanded activities.

The reestablishment of the unity of the National Committee, with organizational guarantees for its firm maintenance in the near future, was accomplished only after a protracted struggle in the NC which had been extended into the membership in the New York branch and which developed sharp factional manifestations and tendencies toward group formation. This struggle came to a climax at the plenum. The disputed questions were discussed there for four days with complete frankness, without concealing any differences and without attempting to reconcile differences in a false unity. It is thanks to the approach to the problem that the danger of a destructive factional struggle in the League could be arrested, the disputes liquidated on a principled basis, and the misunderstandings eliminated. On the basis of the plenum results, the League membership can and must now demand a real collaboration in the National Committee and the immediate *cessation* of factional struggle *because there is no foundation for any other course*.

In addition to the really important and concrete questions of dispute that necessitated the adoption of definite resolutions, the plenum heard arguments on a number of secondary matters, some of which related to the past, others to future possibilities which need not, and indeed cannot, be concretely decided now—and accusations of a personal nature. Comrades Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer presented a long document which dealt primarily with matters of this kind. On the concluding day of the plenum, after the resolutions on the international question and the question of

the New York branch had been agreed upon, and the political foundation for the unity of the committee thus clearly laid, the question was squarely put to comrades Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer: Do you now wish the plenum to reply to your document in the form of a resolution, or do you wish to withdraw it? Thereupon the three comrades, after a recess to give the matter and its consequences due consideration, announced their decision to withdraw the document from the records of the organization, and stated they were doing so in the interest of unity and collaboration, while retaining the opinions expressed in the document.

The International Question

In order to make clear the full significance of the plenum decisions on this point, it is necessary to explain briefly the chronological development of the dispute. Tangible and really concrete differences on these questions only manifested themselves in recent months after the return of comrade Shachtman from Europe. Prior to that there were only intimations of possible differences, shadings of emphasis, and some dissatisfaction with comrade Shachtman's method of conducting the office of international representative. At the second conference the National Committee members defended a common resolution on the international question which represents the same basic position on the international questions as that of the plenum. On the other hand, comrade Cannon's speech at the conference differed in emphasis from the report of comrade Shachtman.

No political objection was raised against comrade Shachtman's visit to Europe after the conference and no suspicions of factional designs on his part were entertained by other members of the committee. A few days after his return, however, the committee received a protest from comrade Trotsky against the attitude taken by comrade Shachtman while in Europe toward the internal disputes of the other national sections, an attitude which comrade Trotsky maintained had been harmful to the struggle of the progressive elements to cleanse the International Left Opposition of the influence of alien, demoralized, and careerist elements. Comrade Trotsky demanded—and rightly so—that the NC clarify its stand before the international Opposition and say plainly whether it took responsibility for comrade Shachtman's views or not.

At the National Committee meeting where the matter was first considered (13 January 1932), the committee heard the report of comrade Glotzer, who had only recently returned from Europe. He informed the committee of comrade Trotsky's conversation with him about the disputes in the French Ligue and his own observations in France and stated that he agreed with the position of comrade Trotsky and was not in accord with the views of comrade Shachtman. Comrade Shachtman refrained from speaking at the meeting.

Without in any way challenging comrade Shachtman's right to an independent opinion on the questions and without passing a hasty judgment on the specific criticism brought against him by comrade Trotsky, the committee merely put on record the following motion:

The NC takes note of the letter of comrade Trotsky and the copy of his letter to comrade Shachtman regarding the opinions of the latter on the situation in the international Opposition.

1. The reply thereto the NC declares: The said views of comrade Shachtman have been put forward by himself as an individual without consulting the NC and on his own personal responsibility. They do not represent the views of the NC and it takes no responsibility for them.

It was at this meeting, following the adoption of the above motion, that comrade Shachtman resigned his post as editor of the *Militant*, notwithstanding the unanimous vote of all the other members in favor of his continuance.

Following this, translations were made of all the important material bearing on the disputes in the French Ligue and studied by the committee members.

At the meeting of February 17, two projects for resolution—one by comrade Glotzer and one by comrade Cannon—were considered. A motion was carried that a combination of the two projects, which did not differ in essence, be made into a single resolution as the viewpoint of the committee. The motion was carried with the votes of Glotzer, Cannon, and Swabeck. Comrade Shachtman voted against the motion without explaining his own position. Comrade Abern, who had not yet had the opportunity to study the translated material, refrained from voting on that account and later submitted a draft of his own.

On March 15, after the return of comrade Glotzer from his tour, the resolution on the international questions was again

considered. At this meeting, comrade Glotzer expressed his dissatisfaction with the combination which had been made of the two projects and voted for his own original draft. Comrades Cannon and Swabeck voted for the combined resolution. Comrade Abern submitted and voted for a draft of his own. Comrade Shachtman abstained from voting on all of them and presented no resolution of his own. Thus, with all drafts failing of a majority in the resident committee, the three resolutions were submitted by referendum to the nonresident members of the committee.

It was not until the middle of April, when the votes of the nonresident members were received, that the committee could record a majority for the resolution on the international questions and inform the organization and the International Secretariat of its position. Even then, comrade Shachtman withheld his support from the resolution. Comrades Abern and Glotzer did likewise. Their own resolutions at their request were sent out to the branches together with the official resolution. This contributed to the confusion and weakened the force of the attempt of the majority of the committee to rally the membership for a clear and definite stand on the question.

The adoption of the international resolution by a majority of the committee and its publication in the *Militant* of April 23 was undoubtedly a service to the international Opposition insofar as it again definitely recorded the official support of the American League on the side of the progressive and revolutionary tendency in the internal struggles of the European sections. The unanimous vote for this resolution, which has now finally been recorded at the plenum, is another step forward along the same line, and cuts away the ground for speculation by the elements of disintegration in the European sections on any possible support from our League or any part of its leadership. It now remains to mobilize the entire membership of the League in support of this resolution and put an end to all uncertainty or ambiguity as to the attitude of our organization toward the vital conflicts within the European sections.

The NC can only welcome the fact that comrades Abern and Glotzer withdrew their resolutions in favor of the official resolution which had been adopted previously and published in the *Militant*. The vote of comrade Shachtman for the resolution and his

statement dissociating himself entirely from all those persons and groups in the European sections who have counted to a certain extent on his direct or indirect support can likewise be welcomed. But the implications in comrade Shachtman's statement that his position has been "misrepresented" and that "a factional football" has been made of the issue are categorically condemned and rejected. Comrade Shachtman's recognition that the "misunderstandings" were partly caused by his failure to make his position clear is by no means a completely correct statement of the matter. The conflict arose over an erroneous position taken by him and the misunderstandings were due entirely to him. The conflict can be liquidated now because the question has been completely clarified at the plenum and agreement has been reached on a political basis.

The Question of the New York Branch

The factional situation which developed on the resident committee was complicated and sharpened by differences in approach to the problems of the New York branch, the largest branch in the organization and the one coming under most direct and immediate influence of the NC. Within the NY branch there has crystallized over a period of time an intellectualistic tendency composed primarily of student/youth elements who began to take on a group formation under the leadership of comrade Carter. This grouping became an obstruction to the political education and development of the branch as a whole, all the more so since it acquired a predominating position in the leading organ of the branch and used this position as a base of opposition to the NC.

The majority of the plenum put forward as a condition for agreement a common struggle for the political isolation of this harmful grouping and its elimination from the present leadership of the branch. In the course of the discussion it became evident that the differences within the committee in the estimation of this grouping were not of a fundamental character. On that ground it became possible to work out a unanimous resolution which will guide the committee as a whole in its future course in the NY branch.

Comrades Carter, Ray, and Stone on their part regarded the discussion and the decision of the plenum in regard to them with sufficient seriousness to take a step forward to facilitate the

carrying out of the line of the NC. On their own initiative they introduced a statement in which they declared their readiness to support the unification of the NC. To that end they offered to withdraw as candidates for election to the new branch executive committee in order to eliminate any controversy on this point. While such an undertaking need not be insisted upon with complete literalness, the reasons given by these comrades to motivate their action must be noted in their favor. The fact that they now acknowledged the value of unity in the NC and show a willingness, if necessary, to sacrifice some of their own position in order to help in maintaining it is a step forward from their previous attitude toward the NC and toward the responsibilities to the organization devolving upon them. It should be added that these comrades stated their intention to continue and even to increase their activities as members of the branch.

Organization Decisions

Following the adoption of the unanimous resolutions and the agreement to enter upon a new period of united work and collaboration, the plenum majority raised the question of the necessary organizational measures to guarantee the firm execution of the decisions and agreements in the daily work of the resident committee.

The situation in the resident committee prior to the plenum presented an anomaly. On the one hand the majority in the resident committee represented a minority in the committee as a whole and vice versa. On the other hand the main responsibilities of the daily administration of the League devolved upon the minority of the resident committee, which could not conduct its responsibilities, even in small practical questions, without agreement of the majority or an appeal by referendum to the full committee. Such a state of affairs must be ended one way or another. Moreover it must be recognized that the resident committee of five had come to a stalemate and that personal relations within it had served to accentuate the general difficulties.

As the best way to solve the contradiction and at the same time to refute the accusation of a conservative organizational policy on the part of the old Party group which up till now has monopolized the leadership, the plenum decided to co-opt two new members to the committee with full rights and one candi-

date with voice but no vote, none of whom were identified with the old Party group which has led the League since its inception.

This decision is submitted by referendum to the entire membership for its approval along with the other important decisions of the plenum.

The Dispute in the Toronto Branch

In addition to the other questions noted above, the plenum considered a serious dispute which had arisen in the Toronto branch, resulting in its disruption a short time before the plenum convened. A number of documents were submitted. In addition, the conflicting groups were represented at the plenum by comrade Spector on the one side and Krehm on the other. Comrade Roth, who was not able to remain for the discussion on this point, submitted a written statement. The decision of the plenum on the question is embodied in a self-explanatory resolution which goes out to all the branches together with this statement and the other plenum material. Here it is only necessary to add that both comrades, Spector and Krehm, pledged themselves to support the decision and to work for the reconsolidation of the Toronto branch on that basis.

The Dispute over Engels' Introduction

The ostensible but not the real cause of the sharp factional situation which developed in the resident committee was the dispute which arose in regard to comrade Swabek's article in the *Militant* of March 5 attacking a previous article by comrade Carter in *Young Spartacus* of January. Comrade Shachtman took issue with comrade Swabek's conclusions and defended the position of comrade Carter.

The superficiality of this issue was demonstrated by the fact that the plenum did not find it necessary to adopt a resolution on the point one way or another. After the important disputes had been settled, as noted above, it was unanimously agreed that the matter of the Engels introduction be referred for an objective discussion in the membership, the comrades having different viewpoints being free to present them. The question is to be discussed on its political and theoretical merits without connection with the other disputes.

The Discussion in the Membership

The plenum was unanimously of the opinion that the adoption of the unanimous resolutions on the most important questions removes all ground for a factional struggle in the organization, which would have to be concluded within one month, and represents a preparation of the organization for a new expansion of its activities on the basis of a firm internal unity. The resident committee has been charged with the task of working out a new program of work in this light, which is to include practical proposals for a serious and planned class-struggle activity, in addition to our propagandistic and critical activity directed to the Party but not in contradiction to it.

Comrades! The fundamental political unity of the leadership of the League as a whole and its capacity to overcome a threatened crisis on a principled basis has once again been demonstrated by the results of our second plenum. It is for the rank-and-file membership now to weigh and discuss all the material and to pronounce their decision. If the membership now will rally firmly around the decisions of the plenum, speak out clearly for unity and against every manifestation of a frivolous faction spirit, our League can go forward to a new series of second accomplishments for which the solid work of the past three and a half years had prepared us.

All the conditions of the class struggle are preparing the way for the great future of Communism. All the events prove over and over again the Left Opposition alone is the genuine representative of the Communist doctrines of Marx and Lenin. We are firmly convinced that the development of the class struggle on an international scale and in America are rapidly creating the conditions for a great expansion of the influence and strength of the Left Opposition. This will surely be the case if we prove equal to our responsibilities and our tasks.

We should regard our second plenum as a memorable event in the consolidation and preparation of the League for its future, as the starting point for a great new period of united struggle and achievement.

**Statement of the National Committee (Minority):
The Results of the Plenum
of the National Committee**

by Martin Abern, Albert Glotzer, and Max Shachtman
29 June 1932

Submitted to the resident committee at a June 30 meeting, this statement engendered a lengthy discussion and a motion by Cannon characterizing it as "a factional document that falsifies the decisions of the plenum, attempts to incite the membership to overturn them, directly contradicts the action of the said comrades in withdrawing their document from the records of the plenum, and attempts to smuggle it back in politer form." The statement was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 2 (July 1932).

In a statement to the membership on the plenum, written after the Shachtman group submitted this document, and subsequently published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 1, Cannon wrote:

We deem it now necessary to hand over to the membership all the essential documents which have accumulated in the records of the committee in the course of the conflict. With this material before them the members of the League will be able to gain a clear understanding of the disputes which disrupted the resident committee and to form a decisive judgment.

This is the only course open now. The National Committee has endeavored up to the last moment of the plenum to maintain peace in the organization as long as it could be done without compromising any essential policy. It held the door open to the minority, passed no resolutions against them, and approached them in good faith on the basis of unity and collaboration the moment they complied with the minimum political demands. The minority members are trying to frustrate these designs with a double-dealing maneuver. They retreated from their positions and spoke for peace at the plenum, and a week later they wrote a factional appeal against the plenum. They are trying to play hide-and-seek with the National Committee. They are trifling with the unity and stability of the National Committee, which is especially necessary

*now and which they have no principled ground to attack. The membership of the League must call a halt to this unprincipled faction game.*³⁷²

1. The plenum of the National Committee of the League held on 10-13 June 1932 was called together to discuss the disputes which had arisen in the resident committee in New York. It established the following facts:

- a. On the essential questions of principle and policy of the League, there exist at present no fundamental differences of opinion among the members of the National Committee.
- b. On the situation in and development of the International Left Opposition, particularly in Europe, it was shown that *in spite of contrary assertions*, a unanimous line exists in the committee, enabling the plenum to present for discussion a single viewpoint.
- c. On the situation in the New York branch, the discussions at the plenum revealed that the charge of an "opposition bloc" between the undersigned and the Carter "group" was unfounded.

The last two points were the ones raised in the resident committee during the preplenum discussion as questions requiring decision. The fact that the plenum was able to adopt unanimous resolutions on both questions, on the one hand, makes possible a calm and objective discussion of the situation in the League, without exaggerations or factional polemics, and on the other hand, eliminates the danger which threatened us of a sharp factional struggle in the absence of any clearly defined or fundamental differences of opinion.

2. The friction and lack of collective and efficient collaboration in the resident committee did not originate with the disputes over the international questions or the New York branch situation. They have their origin in differences and antagonisms existing in the committee for a long period of time over questions relating to the tempo of the Opposition's development in the United States, the manner of administration at the center, the relations between the committee and the membership, and the interpretation over the character of the American Opposition. At times in the past, these differences assumed an extremely acute form; sometimes they appeared only as shadings of opinions or emphasis. The first plenum of the National Committee in 1930, without adopt-

ing any resolutions on the disputes, nevertheless laid the basis for eliminating them as a hindrance to the work of the leading committee. They were further eliminated from an active place on the order of the day by the harmonious collaboration established in the committee from that time until the convocation of the Second National Conference last fall. The appearance of the whole National Committee with unanimous resolutions was an indication of the progress made toward overcoming the difficulties of the past and promised an even closer coordination of efforts and sounder political unity in the future.

3. The previously unannounced intervention of comrade Cannon against the report on the international situation in the Left Opposition, unanimously assigned to comrade Shachtman and against which no criticism had been leveled when it was delivered at the New York branch, as well as the strenuous opposition offered to the proposal that comrade Lewit be added to the incoming National Committee, created a breach in the collaboration which had existed up to then. In face of this situation, all the members of the National Committee agreed to grant comrade Shachtman's request for a leave of absence. In addition to other reasons that had no relation to the situation in the committee, he asked to be given the leave in order that the difficult conditions engendered toward the end of the conference might meanwhile be eliminated or moderated and a more effective collaboration be resumed in the committee.

4. Toward the end of his stay in Europe, comrade Shachtman replied to a request from comrade Trotsky for his personal views on the situation in the French Ligue with a letter from Paris on 1 December 1931. The views expressed in this letter caused comrade Trotsky to request, upon Shachtman's return to New York, that the National Committee declare whether or not it shared these opinions. The committee of course replied that these views represented comrade Shachtman's personal opinions. Comrade Shachtman at that time considered that the situation which was being created in the committee made it impossible for him to continue in the responsible post of editor which he had occupied up to then.

5. In spite of the assertions and rumors concerning the existence in the League of a Navillist or semi-Navillist or Landauist tendency,

which were current at that time in New York, comrade Shachtman refused to make a statement of his position in the committee in order that it might not become the object of misconstruction or dispute in the League. This erroneous silence, however, did not clear up the situation and made it possible for a false interpretation to be put upon his position. His mistake, his actual position with regard to the international Opposition, as well as the question of the letter of December 1, were completely clarified in the statement made by comrade Shachtman to the plenum on 12 June 1932. Comrades Abern and Glotzer had already made their positions clear some time before then, when the National Committee was engaged in drafting a resolution on the international question. They submitted their drafts of a resolution because they found themselves unable to agree with the motivation contained in the draft of comrade Cannon.

6. The immediate cause for the precipitation of the dispute in the committee was the discussion which arose within it over the article written in the *Militant* by comrade Swabeck in reply to that of comrade Carter in *Young Spartacus*. At the end of a statement on the historical controversy over the Engels foreword of 1895, comrade Shachtman also replied briefly to accusations that had been made against him by comrades Cannon and Swabeck in a previous committee meeting where the Engels dispute was discussed, regarding his alleged attitude toward Naville and Landau. This in turn brought forth a lengthy document by comrades Cannon and Swabeck, which dealt not only with the Engels controversy, but primarily with other points: the international question and the New York branch. The dispute over Engels was thereby enlarged to embrace other, more serious and pertinent questions and charges. In their statement, the comrades declared that their disputes with comrade Shachtman began a year or more ago on international questions and that there has been a "steadily developing divergence over questions which we consider decisive for the future of our movement." The statement was also made that the undersigned had been supporting or encouraging the Carter group in the New York branch. At the same time, comrade Cannon advanced the idea that a sharp factional struggle would now break out in the League, requiring a definitive solution and endangering the existence of the various undertakings (*Militant*, *Unser Kampf*, etc.) to which the League had progressed.

7. The undersigned were therefore compelled to reply to the assertions contained in the document of comrades Cannon and Swabeck which we did not and do not consider correct in any respect. In a reply to it, therefore, we outlined that internal development and disputes in the League for the past period in order to show that the contentions of comrades Cannon and Swabeck did not correspond to the real situation. While pointing out where the differences had originated and bringing forward a number of criticisms of the work and conduct of the National Committee, we pointed out that whatever divergences exist on a number of questions today are of an embryonic and not clearly defined nature, which must not be exaggerated or forced; consequently, we concluded, a factional struggle in the League must be avoided so that the organization shall not be torn by an internal dispute in the absence of any political or principled differences of major importance.

8. On the ground that the differences were so irreconcilable that a plenum of the National Committee could not solve them, comrades Cannon and Swabeck proposed an immediate discussion in the League and conference to follow directly after it. We proposed an immediate plenum so that the full membership of the National Committee should first have the opportunity to discuss and decide the disputed questions. The affirmative vote of all the out-of-town members finally made possible the holding of such a plenum.

9. At the plenum, the committee engaged in a thorough and open discussion of the internal situation, which could not avoid an extreme sharpness at times. At the end of these discussions, it was clear that every possible measure had to be taken to avoid a factional struggle in the organization, which would unwarrantedly render it ineffective for the coming period. In view of the disputes, however, it was also decided that the membership shall have adequate opportunity to discuss the situation for a fixed period, at the end of which the resolutions presented by the plenum should be voted upon and the organization as a whole mobilized for the urgent tasks that confront it. That this is desirable and possible is shown by the fact that the elimination of the sharpest points of contention and the acknowledged absence of deep political differences have laid the basis for a reestablishment of a functioning collaboration in the leading committee, with the positive results for the League as a whole which this implies.

10. The international question at the plenum. After a lengthy discussion on the subject, comrade Spector introduced a complete resolution on the international question which represented our point of view. Comrade Shachtman, in order to clarify his position on the question and bring all misunderstandings to an end, introduced a statement of his views. Comrade Glotzer regarded the resolution of comrade Spector as more adequate and therefore withdrew his original draft in support of the former. Comrade Abern's draft, which comrade Spector had originally considered more objective but insufficiently motivated and rounded, was also withdrawn. Both of these withdrawals were made with the aim especially in mind to take the international questions out of the realm of any possible factional conflict and to present the membership and the international Opposition with a single document which would actually reflect the fact that a unanimous view really exists on the fundamental questions of the Left Opposition in the National Committee. For the same reason, all the comrades consented to vote for comrade Spector's resolution, which was then unanimously adopted at the plenum. This makes it more than ever possible to discuss the international questions and to draw the valuable lessons from the internal developments in the European Opposition in an entirely objective manner, free from factional considerations and distortions. In this respect, therefore, the plenum had a most positive value for the coming period of the League.

11. The Carter question. On this question too there was a lengthy discussion, participated in not only by committee members, but also by comrade Carter, who made a statement of his position. The discussion revealed that the assertions originally made concerning the views on this point held by the undersigned did not correspond with their actual standpoint. At the end of the discussion, comrade Shachtman introduced a resolution on the Carter "group," which, while it did not agree entirely with every aspect of the views held on the matter by comrades Cannon and Swabeck, was nevertheless accepted by the latter as a draft basis for a unanimous resolution. The statement made by comrades Carter, Stone, and Ray also served to help clarify this disputed question and made possible its speedy solution in the coming period.

12. Toward the end of the sessions, comrades Cannon and Swabeck demanded of the undersigned the formal withdrawal of

the document we had drawn up in reply to their statement of 22 March 1932. During the plenum, the statements made in our document were not taken up or replied to by the other comrades. In view of the situation, the comrades declared that unless the document were withdrawn it would involve such a reply on their part and consequent discussion in the League as could throw the organization into a factional struggle. The points raised in our document were presented to the plenum chiefly as a reply to the erroneous assertions made in the first document of comrades Cannon and Swabek. In view of the practical agreement that had been reached on such issues as the international question and the New York branch, making possible the elimination of unfounded charges previously made; because of the indications that such a discussion as would follow on the document and the proposed reply would involve a factional battle in the League; and in view of the understanding that the original document of comrades Cannon and Swabek would not be presented to the membership as a basis for discussion—the undersigned announced their decision to withdraw the document formally from the committee's records, without however renouncing any of the views expressed in it. This action also, we believe, will have the effect of averting an acute struggle in the League and making the coming discussion an objective one.

13. The co-optations. We have already expressed our viewpoint on this action of the plenum in a statement presented to the committee. The addition of two new members and one candidate to the committee at the present time is an action which we cannot support. The additions are not made upon the basis of merit primarily, for there are half a dozen other comrades in the New York branch who take precedence in this respect. It is not in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the plenum, which showed a political harmony and do not warrant a tendentious changing of the composition of the committee for the purpose of gaining an automatic majority for one side in the committee against another. It can tend only to perpetuate a division in the committee instead of breaking it down. While opposing these additions, we at the same time announced our decision not to make this question, regardless of the vote cast on it, an issue for sharp factional dispute in the League. However, we cannot support it any more than we could support it in the session of the plenum.

14. The editorship of the *Militant*. In view of the liquidation of disputed issues at the plenum, comrade Abern thereupon proposed toward the end of the sessions that comrade Shachtman resume the post of editor of the *Militant*, which he formerly held. All the comrades of the committee, as well as comrade Trotsky in his letters here, had previously declared that there were no political objections to comrade Shachtman's continuation in the editorial post. Although comrade Abern's motion failed to carry at the plenum on its first presentation, comrade Cannon announced at the same session that, having reconsidered the question, he would also propose that comrade Shachtman resume his former position. The plenum as a whole thereupon voted favorably upon the proposal. This action, like the resolutions on the international question and the New York branch, helps to remove another source of difference in the committee and makes possible the consolidation and functioning of the committee on a collective basis.

15. The Toronto branch dispute. In the discussion which followed the reports of comrades Krehm and Spector on the situation in the Toronto branch, the plenum decided to support the political tendency represented by comrade Spector and to reject the standpoint of the other section of the Toronto branch. The resolution on this question will make it possible to cement and strengthen the Opposition in Toronto and throughout Canada, laying the basis for a reunification of the branch and the development toward an increasingly autonomous and eventually independent Opposition section, such as was originally visualized in the Constitution of the League.

16. The Engels controversy. The plenum took no position on the controversy over Engels' foreword of 1895. It did, however, make provisions for an objective discussion of the historical and theoretical aspects of the dispute, unmarred by polemical, internal sharpness such as has prevented the League from deriving the maximum of educational value from the controversy.

* * * * *

The unavoidable preoccupation of the plenum with internal disputes did not make it possible to take up a number of important questions of our work in general. This defect can be overcome most speedily and effectively if the discussion which is to

follow in the branches is organized in an objective manner, calmly, and without acrimoniousness or sharpening of the situation, and if it is dominated by the desire, expressed by all comrades, to prevent the crisis with which we were threatened and which the plenum took the first important steps to liquidate. Such a discussion will be of benefit to the League, particularly if it comes out of it with serried ranks and a conviction that the basis exists and must be broadened for a rapid progress of our movement in this country. All developments point to increased possibilities for the growth of the Opposition, for more energetic intervention in the class struggle for which the past propagandistic work has prepared us. If we act in accordance with the responsibilities that confront us, we will be able to utilize these possibilities to their maximum for the furtherance of our cause.



What Position Will You Take?

Letter by Max Shachtman to John Edwards³⁷³

3 July 1932

*On the same day Shachtman wrote similar letters to Carl Cowl in Minneapolis and Maurice Spector in Toronto. On July 4 Glotzer wrote a report to Trotsky, enclosing the plenum statements of both groups.*³⁷⁴

Despite the promising results of the plenum, matters have now taken a distinct turn to the worse. At the plenum we managed to liquidate—to all intents and purposes—a number of the most pressing questions, and in order to avoid the onus of a factional struggle which Cannon threatened, we withdrew our principal document from the records and retreated on some other questions. Cowl must have informed you of the details on this phase of the discussions. However, on June 25, Cannon proposed a statement on the plenum's results to be sent out to the membership, with which we could not, of course, agree. It was the same old stuff in politer form. They granted us the right to send out a statement of our own and on June 30, when we handed in the enclosed document (which I send you confidentially), we were

subjected to one of the most violent attacks conceivable. You can read it and see how moderately its language is couched. Nevertheless, justified as we still believe we are in its contents as well, they demanded that we withdraw it from the records, under threat of a factional fight. We refused; we have withdrawn and retreated sufficiently in the interests of League unity, but we have now reached a point where it has become impossible for us to retreat any further merely on Cannon's threats without wiping ourselves off the face of the organization. What Cannon is concerned with is the crushing of any opponent whose head comes above water, and that is why his motion (which I also enclose) was presented, which will in all likelihood be carried by the rest of the committee. We voted against it, of course, since we oppose a convention now or a factional struggle, given the absence of clearly defined political divergences. But if Cannon forces us into it and tries, as he is trying, to make the international question the issue (when it was thoroughly liquidated at the plenum, by their own admission)—then we have no other course but to fight the thing out.

You have your own ideas about Cannon's "maneuvering superiority" in an internal fight and I don't intend to argue the point here. But it is hardly involved here. It sometimes takes only one to launch a fight, and considering Cannon's determination to "liquidate us," the fight appears to be unavoidable now that it has been opened up. That is why I must once more bring up the question of the position you will take. I am not engaging in empty flattery when I say that your influence, particularly in the Chicago branch, is of the highest importance in the dispute and I am anxious that it shall be exercised properly, and by properly I mean that it would be hurtful to the interests of the League if you were to adopt a passive or semipassive attitude now. I have no doubt that Oehler, who has adopted a most distinctly factional attitude here in favor of Cannon, has been writing his views to the Chicago comrades, and will continue to do so even if they have decided to have him stay in New York as paid local organizer. That is why it becomes imperative now that you explain some of the basic questions involved to the leading Chicago comrades at least. You know quite well the important questions that lie behind many of the superficial issues of the moment; you know what Cannon represents and why Swabeck, Dunne, and Skoglund support him. And now that Cannon has forced an open factional struggle, it is nec-

essary to enlighten the active comrades, particularly Giganti and the leading youth comrades, of what is what. We are counting upon you to act in the spirit you expressed in your recent letters. And we want you to write us forthwith about your views and suggestions. Best regards from Marty and Al.



A Great Relief

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman³⁷⁵

4 July 1932

Here Trotsky replies to a June 18 letter by Shachtman that enclosed a copy of his plenum statement on international questions.³⁷⁶ Shachtman assured Trotsky that he had not written to anyone in the Spanish section about the disputes.

Your letter of June 18 was a great relief to me in all respects. First, I hope that our friendly relationship will now develop further, undisturbed and with enhanced mutual openness. Second, the fact that the disputed issues were decided unanimously at the plenum and that you personally were reelected unanimously as editor of the *Militant* is a guarantee that in the future the League will be united and march with closed ranks. Third, your statement on the international issues in conjunction with the plenum's decision is of the utmost importance for the resolution of the Spanish question, which at present worries me most of all. The more resolute the international public opinion of our organization toward the obvious political mistakes of the Spanish section, the more hope there will be that the Spanish comrades will be aided in returning to the correct path without personal convulsions. Unfortunately, the most difficult thing in collaborating with the leading comrades in Madrid and Barcelona is that they always regard a programmatic rebuttal or a political criticism only from a purely personal standpoint, thus making debate difficult in the extreme. If I ask them: For what political reasons did they do this or that? They answer me: We have the right to our own opinion—as if someone were disputing this right and as if it were not a

question of what concrete use one makes of this right in a concrete case.

Really healthy party democracy presupposes a certain public opinion that has crystallized through common experience. Without this foundation one would have to start at the beginning every time, and that is the case with the Spanish comrades: Instead of learning from our previous experience, they want to force us to begin again with the first letter of the alphabet.



Reply of the National Committee to the Minority Statement

by James P. Cannon

14 July 1932

Submitted to the resident committee and adopted on July 14 against the vote of Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer, this document was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 2 (July 1932).

The statement of comrades Abern, Glotzer, and Shachtman which purports to give an account of the proceedings and results of the plenum in reality distorts and falsifies them. It attempts to represent the plenum—which rejected their standpoint on all the essential questions—as a vindication of their rejected position. By this fact they demonstrate that the changes of position which they made at the plenum deserve to be considered merely as diplomatic maneuvers and cannot be accepted in good faith. The real aim of the statement is to circumvent the plenum, to restore the state of affairs in the committee to that which obtained before the plenum, and to hold together a factional grouping in the League as a support for such an attitude.

The International Questions

On this point—the most important issue in dispute—the statement says: “It was shown that, *in spite of contrary assertions*, a unanimous line exists in the committee” (our emphasis).

In this presentation of the question they seek to pass off the most serious disputes in the committee as nothing at all, as mere "contrary assertions" against comrades who were in full agreement with the standpoint of the plenum all along. This is a complete falsification of the whole matter. It is an attempt to deceive the membership in order to cover up comrade Shachtman, who brought his factional war against the National Committee into the open in protest against the position taken on the international question.

Here again, as in the five-months' conflict which preceded the plenum, comrades Abern and Glotzer are playing the pernicious role of "friends" and "protectors" of comrade Shachtman, instead of responsible communist leaders seeking to clarify policy in order to protect the interests of the movement. In this they only follow the example of comrade Shachtman, who got himself involved in such fatal blunders and brought so much harm to the European sections of the Left Opposition out of personal considerations and sympathies for individuals who obstructed the development of the Opposition by their careerist aims and worthless intrigues. The fatal logic of personal clique formations is illustrated in every line of the deceitful statement of Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer.

Yes, from a formal standpoint "a unanimous line exists in the committee" on the international questions. This "was shown" at the plenum by the unanimous adoption of the resolution. *But only after Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer had retreated from their previous standpoint and voted for the original resolution of the National Committee.* That is why there is a "unanimous line."

But instead of saying so, openly and honestly, in the manner of communists who are sincerely attempting to rectify an error and safeguard against its repetition, comrade Shachtman seeks a way out of the difficulty by the simple expedient of denying that there ever were any differences. In this unworthy stratagem he has the assistance and support of comrades Abern and Glotzer, whose "protection" of comrade Shachtman had already led them to cooperate with him in the obstruction of the committee's intervention on the international questions for five months before the plenum. By their explanation of the plenum decisions, their whole conduct there—including their vote for the NC resolution on the international question—stamps itself as a maneuver to gain

time and shield themselves from a direct condemnation by the plenum.

The differences over the international questions, which were quite fundamental ones, have been so completely and so convincingly established in the documents and records of the committee that no ground is left for doubt as to how matters really stood before the plenum. In the document of March 22, entitled "Internal Problems of the Communist League of America," signed by comrades Swabeck and Cannon, the origin and essence of this dispute, which comrade Shachtman has tried to sidetrack with his venomous polemic in defense of Carter, was clearly outlined.³⁷⁷ Comrades who wish to trace the dispute to its roots are referred to this document, which retains its validity in all respects. In order to avoid repetition we shall limit ourselves here to the citation of records and documentary proofs which show how false are the present contentions of comrade Shachtman about mere misunderstandings and "contrary assertions"—to say nothing of outright "frame-ups"—of which he was the victim.

The first "contrary assertion" in regard to the position of comrade Shachtman on the situation in the European sections was made by comrade Trotsky. And his indictment did not concern itself at all with merely episodic questions, but with the *whole course* of comrade Shachtman in the International Left Opposition, with his failure to recognize the conflict of tendencies, with his unwillingness to draw any conclusions from the long struggles against the elements of disintegration, of shoddy careerism and intrigue, and his consequent direct and indirect support of these elements. Moreover, the protests of comrade Trotsky were not made once but several times; they were never in the least heeded by comrade Shachtman; and on the very day the plenum opened, a letter from comrade Trotsky returned again, in more emphatic terms than before, to his criticism of the international position of comrade Shachtman.

The conduct of comrade Shachtman since his return from Europe—his contrary votes and his stubborn attempts to sabotage the passing and the publication of the NC resolution on the question, his virulent factional attacks and his attempts to shift the dispute to other, far less important questions—only tended to confirm the accusations of comrade Trotsky and not to refute them. These letters of comrade Trotsky are submitted as documentary

material with this bulletin. Included also is the lengthy letter of comrade Shachtman to comrade Trotsky from Paris on the date of 1 December 1931. Here we quote a few extracts from this material.³⁷⁸

Under date of 25 December 1931 comrade Trotsky wrote to the committee:

My efforts to find a common language with him (Shachtman) in the most disputed European questions were never crowned with success. It always appeared to me that comrade Shachtman was, and still is, guided in these questions, which were somewhat more remote from America, more by personal and journalistic sympathies than by fundamental political considerations.

You will, however, have to understand that it is not taken very pleasantly here when comrade Shachtman, at the acutest moment, adopts a position which completely counteracts the struggle which the progressive elements of the Opposition have been conducting for a long time and upon the basis of which a certain selection took place, and *which appears to be covered by the authority of the American section* (our emphasis).

On 25 December 1931 comrade Trotsky wrote to comrade Shachtman:

Unfortunately, you have answered nothing to my objections to your conduct in Europe. In the meantime, I had to take a position against you also openly, without, at all events, calling you by name, in a circular to the sections. I must establish regretfully that you have drawn absolutely no conclusions from the bad experience, beginning with the international conference of April 1930. The difficult situation in the French Ligue is, to a certain degree, due thanks also to you, for directly or indirectly you always supported those elements which acted like a brake or destructively, like the Naville group. You now transfer your support to Mill-Felix, who have absolutely not stood the test in any regard.

What you say about the German Opposition sounds like an echo of your old sympathies for Landau, which the German comrades do not want to forget and rightly so. In the struggle which we led here against the accidental burned-out or downright demoralized elements, you, dear Shachtman, were never on our side, and those concerned (Rosmer, Naville, Landau, and now Mill) always felt themselves covered in a high measure by the American League. I by no means believe that the American League bears the responsibility for it, but I do find it necessary to send a copy of this letter to the American National Committee so that at least in the future our European struggle may be less influenced by your personal connections, sympathies, etc.

Again on 5 January 1932 comrade Trotsky wrote to the committee:

My concern becomes still more heightened by the fact that comrade Shachtman has not replied to the letters and warnings on my part and on the part of close friends, and that comrade Glotzer, too, who promised me to call comrade Shachtman to order a little, did not take up this matter by a single word. I had the impression that both of them, Shachtman and Glotzer, stood under the impression of the small Jewish Group in Paris and completely overlooked the Opposition movement in Europe.

In a word, clarification of the situation on your part is absolutely necessary.

On 19 May 1932 to the National Committee:

I am very glad you have taken a firm position on the international question.

On the internal dispute in the American League I do not as yet take a position because I have not had an opportunity to study the question with sufficient attentiveness. When I take a position I will try not to allow myself to be influenced in advance by the false and damaging position of comrade Shachtman in all the international questions, almost without exception. On the other hand, however, it is not easy to assume that one can be correct in the most important national questions, when one is always wrong in the most important international questions.

So much for the vile insinuation that the dispute over the international questions arose as a result of assertions falsely made against comrade Shachtman by *other members of the committee*. From the above quotations it is perfectly clear that the opposition to comrade Shachtman's position came most decisively from comrade Trotsky, who was in a far better position to keep track of the international activities and connections of comrade Shachtman than was the National Committee, which he did not find it necessary to consult. But the conflict over the international questions in the National Committee, which comrade Shachtman carried into the membership on other pretexts, did not by any means rest solely on the letters of comrade Trotsky. There is a clearly established record of actions, votes, and abstentions from voting which all go to supplement and confirm the apprehension expressed by comrade Trotsky. Consider this record in contrast to the subterfuge about mere "contrary assertions."

1. On 13 January 1932 the National Committee declared that comrade Shachtman's views on the disputes in the European sec-

tions had been put forward by himself as an individual without consulting the National Committee and that it took no responsibility for them. *Comrade Shachtman abstained from voting and resigned his position as editor of the Militant.* Comrade Glotzer wrote into the record of the meeting: “*In order to clarify my position, particularly because I have returned almost at the same time with comrade Shachtman, I want to state that my views on the international situation are not in accord with his*” (minutes of the NC, 13 January 1932).

2. On February 3 the committee adopted a motion expressing disagreement with the nomination of Mill as a member of the International Secretariat by the Spanish section. *Comrade Shachtman voted against* (minutes of the NC, 3 February 1932).

3. On February 17 the committee passed a motion to adopt a resolution on the situation in the International Left Opposition, “The resolution draft by comrade Glotzer to be taken as a basis and the outlined points submitted by comrade Cannon to be incorporated for the final resolution.” *Comrade Shachtman voted against* (minutes of the NC, 17 February 1932).

4. At the meeting of March 7 comrade Shachtman began his open factional attack against Swabeck and Cannon, on the Carter-Engels dispute, in the presence of New York branch members, rejecting motions to consider the matter first in a closed session! There he first advanced the idea that the international disputes were a “frame-up” against him. There also he rejected for the second time the proposal that he return to his post as editor of the *Militant* (minutes of the NC, 7 March 1932).

5. At the meeting of March 15 comrade Glotzer refused to accept the combination of his draft resolution and the outlined points of comrade Cannon, which he had previously agreed to. Comrade Abern also submitted a separate draft. *Comrade Shachtman abstained on all drafts.*

Thus all resolutions failed of a majority in the resident committee and a delaying referendum of the full committee became necessary before the position of the NC could be established (minutes of the NC, 15 March 1932).

6. On April 18 it was reported at the committee meeting that the international resolution had received a majority of the votes in the full committee. A motion carried to send it to the branches

and ask them to proceed with the discussion and record their opinions. *Comrade Shachtman abstained*. Comrade Glotzer and Abern insisted on sending out their own draft resolutions to the branches along with the official resolution, an action which was bound to create, and it did create, confusion in the branches and militated against a mobilization of the membership in support of the official resolution. Motion carried to print the official resolution in the *Militant*. *Comrade Shachtman voted against* (minutes of the NC, 18 April 1932).

In the face of this record, how can anyone seriously maintain that there was no previous objection to the international resolution on the part of comrade Shachtman? And how, likewise, can it be denied that comrades Abern and Glotzer, who were "not in accord" with his position, nevertheless assisted him at every step in his opposition and obstruction? In addition, there were many occasions, not recorded in the minutes, when comrade Shachtman frankly stated his disagreement with the resolution, his objection to publishing it in the *Militant*, his opinion that we were "too hasty" and that we would regret it, etc. As a matter of fact it was not until the last day of the plenum that comrade Shachtman—after days of debate—informed us of his agreement with the resolution and his readiness to vote for it.

This correction of position can be welcomed and was welcomed by the plenum. It motivated the plenum in refraining from passing a resolution of condemnation and in its attitude of conciliation with the comrades of the minority. But when it is now maintained that the most important factor in the disruption of the resident committee—the dispute over the international questions—was not a real dispute but a manufactured one, and that the plenum only straightened out a misunderstanding, it can only raise the most serious doubts as to the reality of the agreement arrived at. It deprives the organization of any assurance against the repetition of the errors at the next turn in developments. This is precisely the worst feature of the practice of changing a position without frankly saying so and saying why: It leaves the door open for a return to the abandoned policy at any time. We can hardly condemn the Stalinists for this practice with any consistency if we tolerate it in our own ranks.

The attempt of the statement of the minority comrades to explain the change of position by reference to the resolution

introduced by comrade Spector, which, they say, "represented our point of view," is no explanation at all. Comrade Spector's resolution follows completely the line of the original NC resolution and does not contradict it at any point. It deals also with some new matters which have arisen since the adoption of the original resolution and takes the position on them in accordance with its fundamental line. For these reasons it was accepted by the plenum, not as a *substitute* but as "*supplementary and further elaboration of the NC resolution already adopted*" (minutes of the plenum).

The fault of comrade Shachtman's position on the international questions of the Left Opposition was not incidental or episodic; they concerned his approach to the whole problem and his inability to draw the necessary conclusions from the long process of internal struggle in the European sections. One only needs to read what he has written on the subject to convince himself of this. If it is assumed for the moment that comrade Trotsky may have been mistaken in his judgment as to the position of comrade Shachtman and that the attitude recorded in the minutes of the committee does not indicate what it seems to indicate, then turn to the lengthy letter of comrade Shachtman to comrade Trotsky under date of 1 December 1932, which is included as material in this bulletin. What he said there, as well as what he left unsaid, proves conclusively that his letter has nothing in common with the resolution of the NC.

The NC resolution regards the struggle in the French Ligue as a conflict of tendencies and takes a firm position in favoring one and against the others. Comrade Shachtman's letter estimates the matter from the standpoint of episodic disputes of the day, overlooking the conflict of tendencies and giving no support to the more revolutionary current at the moment when international support was the most decisive necessity.

He devotes most of his criticism to the leadership of the French Ligue, shields the Mill-Felix group and minimizes its mistakes, and refrains from criticism of the Naville group altogether. And from this he concludes that the present leadership of the French Ligue should be replaced by a "concentration" leadership, in which the Mill-Felix group and the Naville group will participate and prevent the "domination" of the present leading group. If you see the situation in the French Ligue as a conflict of tendencies, as the NC resolution estimates it, the proposal of comrade Shachtman

has to be regarded as a fundamental error, which would make confusion worse confounded and, *in effect, support the faction struggle of the Mill-Felix and Naville group.*

The NC resolution says, "The leadership of the German section, which has taken shape in the struggle against Landau and his sterile factional regime, must be given all possible international assistance and support in its tremendous responsibilities and opportunities." Shachtman's letter deprecates the abilities of the German leadership in such a way that it called for the reply of Trotsky: "What you say about the German Opposition sounds like an echo of your old sympathies for Landau, which the German comrades do not want to forget and rightly so."

The NC resolution demands a collective participation in the affairs of the European sections. It says:

In order for the League to be useful in the solution of the international problems of the European sections and to educate itself in internationalism in the process, it must firmly organize a *collective* participation. The NC as a whole must familiarize itself with the international questions and bring a collective judgment to bear upon them.

The letter of comrade Shachtman and his general course of action in Europe, regarding which he neither informed nor consulted the committee, are a shining example of the purely personal and individualistic method of dealing with the affairs of the international Opposition which brought such harmful results.

The vote of comrade Shachtman for the NC resolution can have a real significance only insofar as it represents a complete reversal of the position taken in his letter. As long as he does not see that, as long as he does not frankly acknowledge it, he gives no assurance against the return to the direct or indirect support of the disintegrating elements at the first superficial change in the situation.

The New York Branch Situation

The attitude of the plenum toward the situation in the New York branch—the second major question of dispute in the resident committee—was also decidedly different from the representation made in the statement of the minority comrades, Abern, Shachtman, and Glotzer. In this case, as in the case of the international questions, the claim is made that the position of com-

rade Shachtman and the others had been misrepresented and that the plenum discussion clarified matters and made possible a common effort for a "speedy solution" of the problem. This can hold good only to the extent that the minority comrades make a radical change in their preplenum attitude and adapt themselves to the resolution on this point worked out by the resident committee on the instructions of the plenum. This resolution conforms to the analysis of the problem contained in the statement of comrades Swabeck and Cannon, introduced into the NC on March 22 ("Internal Problems of the Communist League of America").

The Carter group, as defined in the resolution, is a crystallization in the New York branch which obstructs its development and menaces its future. The dispute over this question was neither the result of misunderstanding nor of misrepresentation, but rather, as in the international dispute, of a difference in approach, analysis, and conclusions. For a long time comrade Shachtman minimized the harmfulness of this group and in practice gave it direct and indirect support. His first open attack was made in defense of Carter (see the "Statement by Shachtman" dated March 12). This was the signal for the opening of the faction struggle in the New York branch, during which comrades Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer and those closest to them combined forces with the Carter group against us on every issue of dispute in meeting after meeting, both in the branch and in the branch executive committee. At the opening of the plenum, comrade Swabeck demanded as a condition for agreement a common struggle against the Carter group, as well as a common support of the NC resolution on the international questions. This condition was fully supported by the plenum and remains unaltered.

On the concluding day of the plenum comrade Shachtman submitted a statement on the Carter group—an annihilating political characterization, which was acceptable to us and was included in the final resolution on the question of the New York branch. But when it came to the point of drawing the logical conclusion from such a characterization—to provide in a resolution for a militant political struggle, under the leadership of the NC, to free the branch from this paralyzing influence—comrades Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer drew back and sought to dissolve the whole question in meaningless words that would leave

everything where it stood before and cancel the results of the plenum discussion. They refused to accept the resolution of the NC on the New York branch.³⁷⁹

In this action there is to be seen a striking parallel—and not by accident either—with the drawn-out course of ambiguity and evasion we encountered in our efforts to bring the whole committee to a concrete and unmistakable standpoint on the international questions. And it raises very seriously again the question as to how their final vote for the international resolution of the NC is understood by them and what it will signify in practice. The fight against the elements of disintegration on an international scale and the corresponding support of the revolutionary groupings in the various sections is undoubtedly the foremost duty. Comrade Shachtman, according to his vote at the plenum, understands that now. But the European sections are far away. A resolution in regard to them costs nothing and may mean nothing.

The test of one's understanding of the international policy and consistency in support of it arises concretely in connection with the analogous problems at home. The long internal struggle within the European sections has not been a struggle of persons. It has been a fight, on the one hand, to make a selection of the genuinely progressive and revolutionary elements in the International Left Opposition and, on the other hand, to rid the movement of alien tendencies and influences. The refusal to see the problem in this light was at the root of the consistently false judgments of comrade Shachtman in the international field. A real correction of this basic error ought to manifest itself in a ready comprehension of the issues involved in the New York branch.

The problem there is to consolidate a firm political nucleus and progressively to transform a heterogeneous body into a communist organization. The Carter group is the polar grouping which attracts around itself the politically weak and demoralized elements and disorients the youth. A resolute fight against it follows inescapably from the premise laid down in the international resolution. The NC resolution on the situation in the New York branch is the complement to and the American translation of the international resolution. Comrade Shachtman's present support of the first will have a weightier significance and will deserve to be taken more seriously when he discontinues his opposition to the second.

By this it is nowise intended to represent the Carter grouping

as an exact duplication of this or that European group, nor in general to transplant the concrete struggles of any of the European sections to the American League in a mechanical and artificial way. We have in mind the essence of the problem which is more or less common to all sections of the international Opposition: The consolidation of the organization around a selection of the progressive and revolutionary elements in the course of a systematic struggle against the "negative and harmful" tendencies of various kinds, each of which have their own peculiar and national characteristics. The thing is to see and understand the specific problem and danger in one's own organization and to deal with it concretely. Otherwise a hundred general resolutions on the faraway sections are meaningless.

The Carter grouping is not as great a problem nor as great a danger as the groups of Landau-Naville and others proved to be in Europe, nor has it matured all the negative qualities of these groups. And it is not likely to do so. Or, at any rate, it is not likely to do as much harm to the League, although the potentialities are there. But this is to be attributed chiefly to the circumstance that for the past period a systematic struggle has been carried on against this group by a part of the NC, despite the interference and protection accorded to the group by comrade Shachtman, and in the course of this struggle a certain selection has already taken place. The group now stands formally condemned by the plenum, after a lengthy discussion in which its representative was heard. On that basis the struggle can and must be raised to a higher stage and brought to a successful conclusion. This is the way we understand the question. And that is the way we shall proceed, with or without the cooperation of the minority.

The "negative and harmful characteristics" of the Carter group and the "bad influence" exerted by it "particularly on the younger comrades," which comrade Shachtman explained with sufficient lucidity in his statement to the plenum on the question, are not exaggerated by the NC and thereby elevated above their real proportions. No, it is the coddling and shielding of this group, the direct and indirect support given to it under guise of protest against the "clubbing of the youth," that nurtures and strengthens this group and draws out the process of liquidating its influence. It is this attitude, maintained over a period of time by Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer, that has magnified the issue and necessitated

a direct intervention by the plenum of the NC. A united struggle of the entire NC along the lines of the adopted resolution would dispose of this obstruction in a comparatively short time and without convulsions in the branch. The shilly-shally policy of the minority comrades would prolong the difficulty, enlarge its scope, spread demoralization in the organization, and result in an inevitable convulsion.

For the Unity and Consolidation of the League

The aim of every serious-minded and conscientious Oppositionist must be the consolidation of our organization and the preservation of its unity for the great tasks that lie before us. This is the policy and the aim of the National Committee, which has been demonstrated in practice throughout the nearly four years of the existence of the American Opposition. The leadership has been successful up till now in maintaining the unity of the organization because it has understood that the foundation for unity can only be a common policy on the most important questions and a resolute struggle against divergences from it. The various attempts at disruption which we have seen (Fox, Weisbord, Malkin, etc.) were not frustrated by pacifism and personal diplomacy and pious appeal for peace at any price, but by uncompromising struggle against the elements of disintegration and the false conceptions they advanced. Our unity was won and confirmed in struggle, and so it will always be.

They are wrong who see in the present situation, which threatens a faction struggle in the League, a problem of persons and personal relations which may be solved by diplomacy and by concessions here and there: We understand that personal relations are an important but nevertheless a secondary question. That is why the plenum, which was summoned together to deal with the conflict in the resident committee, yielded absolutely nothing from the policy which it considered correct and necessary and then went to every reasonable length toward conciliation to the extent that its political demands were met. Every sign of a reawakening of the conflict in the membership discussion is due entirely and exclusively to the attempt of the minority to negate the conclusions of the plenum and to return to the positions they abandoned there. A conciliation on such a basis would be an artificial one and would only prepare the ground for deeper convulsions later on.

The statement of Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer speaks a great deal about unity and the avoidance of faction struggle, but the contentions in the document and their actions since the plenum speak a different language. And it is the actions which are most important and decisive, for they have a logic beyond the control of protestations and even of intentions. It is true that the tone of the new statement is more polite than the one heard in the polemics before and at the plenum. The foul accusations of "frame-up" with which comrade Shachtman poisoned the atmosphere of the committee a short while ago, the attempt to sidetrack the important issues in favor of personal, outlived, and secondary questions, are moderated for the membership discussion into sly hints to the same effect. But the basic position which he maintained before, which brought about the conflict, is restated in the document. The content is there and it is not made more acceptable by the moderated form in which it is presented.

In reality the statement does not speak for a liquidation of the faction struggle but for the postponement of it. The statement is the program for a *truce*, during which the worthless "issues" which they withdrew from the plenum will be kept alive in a concealed form and a faction grouping held together on that basis which would be a standing menace to the unity of the League. If the membership of the League allows itself to be deceived by such a stratagem, if it seeks to purchase a momentary peace on such a basis, it will only condemn the League to a long period of demoralization which will lead the way to a real convulsion. The unity of the League must be asserted in the firm rejection of this attempt to circumvent the actions of the plenum.

The unity of a communist organization is not realized by universal agreement, but by an organizational process, by discussion and decision and eventually by the subordination of the minority to the majority. Democratic centralism signifies not only discussion but also decision. The idea that decisions of the organization can be ignored, that endless discussion can proceed as though nothing had happened, has nothing in common with the communist principle of organization. A plenum of the National Committee is a highly important and significant affair. The League can allow it to be ignored only at the peril of its own disintegration. Yet that is precisely what the statement of Abern, Glotzer, and Shachtman sets out to do. The attitude of the plenum did not

suit them—therefore they appeal against it. The statement even goes so far as to polemicize against the decision of the national conference on the composition of the NC. They hint at all kinds of “differences” which they did not ask the plenum to decide. And all the time they protest that they do not want a factional struggle in the League and do not consider a conference necessary. How can a communist organization tolerate such an attitude?

If a conference is not needed and not demanded, then it is self-evident that the unity of the organization has to rest on the decision of the plenum. One cannot face both ways on this question. The appeal of the minority against the plenum—the decisions of which are concretized and guaranteed by the co-optations—is an appeal to repudiate the National Committee, to deprive it of the necessary, to make it dependent in its decisions on the agreement of the minority, and thereby to paralyze its work. To combine such an understanding with pious expressions about the desire for unity in the organization and a “functioning collaboration in the leading committee” is a cynical mockery. It is factionalism in the worst possible form. The League must speak categorically against it.

For or against the decisions of the plenum—that is the way the minority puts the question in its statement. The National Committee has no choice but to accept it and to call upon the membership to reinforce the plenum decisions with their approval. All the material is submitted for the discussion. The questions must be gone into deeply. They must be firmly and deliberately decided. The greatest menace to the organization will come from any sort of ambiguity, from any tendency to leave the questions undecided. From that demoralization would inevitably follow. Against that we appeal to the comrades for the firm consolidation of the unity of the League, for the establishment of discipline and the concentration of the membership on the new program of activity *on the basis of the plenum decisions and under the leadership of the National Committee.*

Molinier's Personality Is Not the Issue

Letter by Max Shachtman to Andrés Nin³⁸⁰

19 July 1932

First of all I must apologize for never having written to you since I left Barcelona; our mutual occupation with work since then has undoubtedly prevented us from opening up the correspondence about which we spoke when we met. And I must tell you candidly that I am impelled to write to you now (however briefly) because of the uneasiness I feel over the developments recently manifested in the Spanish Opposition. While I have not at hand all the information I would desire, I nevertheless have read enough of the correspondence that has passed between the Spanish center of the Opposition and comrade Trotsky, plus other documents, to strengthen the impressions I had at the time I visited Spain and France last year. Since my name has been mentioned and used in this connection, I feel it necessary to write to you about my opinion so that the utmost clarity may exist on this score. If I make some criticisms of the course that the Spanish comrades have pursued in this connection, be assured that they are motivated by a concern for the cause in which we are commonly interested.

On the surface, it appears that the dispute in which you are involved with the other sections of the International Left Opposition centers around the situation within the French Ligue. On this question, I believe that the leading Spanish comrades have adopted a false or, at best, an ambiguous position. When I was in Madrid, I urged comrades Lacroix and Andrade that they (that is, the whole organization) must participate more actively in the internal life of the Opposition, particularly of the European Opposition; that to this end, the whole Spanish organization must be kept informed about events in our inner life through the medium of an internal bulletin. The objections of these comrades were that the "Spanish Opposition must not be dragged into such disputes," etc. I got the impression from them (and, I must add, also from you) that they regarded the struggle inside the French Ligue in particular

as an unprincipled personal quarrel, centering around the personality of comrade Molinier. You will recall that I agreed with some of the criticisms made by all the comrades of the personal characteristics of comrade Molinier. At the same time, I warned the comrades, especially in Madrid, that they showed the tendency to make comrade Molinier responsible for all the difficulties and errors made by the Spanish Opposition. I believe that the Spanish comrades have *substituted* a personal consideration for a *political judgment* of the important struggle inside the French Ligue. This line of conduct has brought them to a false position.

What is important in the internal developments in our little international is not whether this comrade or that one has good or bad personal characteristics, or makes this or that mistake. The important thing is the political tendency he represents and the political attitude we adopt toward him, and toward the individuals or groups opposing him, and the political motivations on which we base ourselves. At the time I was in Paris, I thought for a short time that the "way out" of the internal situation was a "concentration leadership" of all the groups. I was mistaken in this idea and after some time I informed the comrades that I no longer shared it. For its execution would put the French Ligue back to a stage which it has already passed. The present leadership in the Ligue may not be the "best" directing group in the abstract, but it represents the result of an internal process of revolutionary development, grouped together in the course of the struggle against other more or less clearly defined tendencies. And it is in this characterization of the Ligue's development that I fail to find the Spanish comrades having taken a clear position—and a clear position is now more necessary than ever.

If one leaves out of consideration secondary, episodic, and subordinate phases of the struggle, it must be recognized that the fight against the group of intellectuals (Collinet, etc.) and Rosmer was a progressive struggle against intellectualistic and semisyndicalistic elements. The struggle against Naville and his friends bore the same stamp, for Naville revealed himself most clearly on two decisive points: in the struggle against Landau's miserable intrigues, where he took an arch-"diplomatic" position, and in relation with the "Gauche Communiste" where he took a no less typically Navillist attitude. I do not know now just what Naville's position is at the present time, and it is not of very great consequence, because I

believe he *plays* with important political questions. Or, take the leadership of the "groupe juif" [Jewish Group] and comrade Mill. You know that I have a regard for some of comrade Mill's qualities, but the fact remains that he has not measured up to his task in the most important respects. Regardless of personal considerations, which take a subordinate place in this respect, he has orientated himself—or rather disorientated himself—in a completely false position in the Ligue. Toward the very end of the fight against Rosmer he completely compromised and discredited himself and the Jewish Group by the letter they sent Rosmer—semisindicalist and supporter of the Opposition's enemy, Landau—inviting him to lead the fight against Molinier! All of this you know better than I. The question which the Spanish comrades must answer is not whether they are for or against this or that phase of Molinier's personality, but if they are for or against Rosmer, Naville, Mill—and on what political grounds.

At one time you voted to make comrade Mill your representative in the International Secretariat. Our National Committee here voted against this nomination. I voted against the other comrades here, not because I agreed with your nomination but because I did not want to appear to deny the Spanish comrades the right to make their own selection. But that right is not the important thing, nor does anyone question it or deny it. What is important is the political reasons which motivate such a nomination. This the Spanish comrades did not and do not give. Yet it is necessary. Rosmer, Naville, Landau, Mill—these represent certain tendencies inside and outside the International Left Opposition. The majority of the national sections, which have taken a stand against these groups and individuals, represent a *different political* tendency. On which side do the Spanish comrades stand?

You know, I suppose, that the paper of the "Gauche Communiste" in Paris has publicly speculated on the differences of the Spanish comrades with the International Secretariat and the other sections. Rosmer and his friends are openly hinting (is that not clear?) that the Madrid conference showed "friendliness" to them. Have the Spanish comrades repudiated these claims and hints publicly? I hope so, for otherwise they would compromise the Spanish Opposition. Ambiguity in such questions as I raise is sometimes the first door to a deep internal crisis, which I hope the Spanish section will be able to avoid in time.

There is one other phase of the internal disputes particularly in the recent life of the European Opposition, which is not of insignificance. Underneath the surface of the clique fighting and machinations of Paz, Urbahns, Frey, Landau, Rosmer, Naville (to a clearer extent also the Prometeo Group), etc., has been the attempt to establish in the International Left Opposition a "new leadership" in place of that which we recognize in the cadres of the Russian Opposition. To this attempt, all these elements have a "right." Only it must be done openly and in the name of a distinct and avowed platform. And what platform could these motley elements offer? What platform have they offered? Not one of them has stood the test in any important question. To support them in any way, even indirectly and involuntarily, means to oppose the line that the Russian and international Oppositions have followed up to now. The Prometeoists do this openly, it must be admitted, on the question of "democratic demands," the united front, etc., and they are fundamentally wrong. The others also do it, not so openly, but with equally fundamental wrongness. The present position of the Spanish leading comrades puts them at best in an ambiguous position.

Finally, you know that certain elements naming themselves "Left Oppositionists" in Europe advocate a "universal" congress of the Opposition, which would include those elements and groups with which we have already broken in the past. I cannot imagine a more ludicrous idea. This proposal means that we shall start all over again and go once more through the process of purging which rid us of Urbahns, Van Overstraeten, Rosmer, et tutti quanti [and all the others]. If it does not mean this, it has no meaning at all. The American League is unanimously opposed to such a sterile proposition. I hope that the Spanish comrades will take an equally firm stand against it.

In all of these observations, I repeat, I am actuated by the desire to clarify the situation and advance the cause of the international Opposition. The Spanish Opposition should intervene more actively—and from a correct standpoint—in the life of the other sections; the other sections must intervene in the life of the Spanish Opposition. It is in this way that the essence of true internationalism will be served. Perhaps this personal letter from a friendly critic will contribute toward that end.

With best wishes to all the Barcelona comrades whose acquaintance I was fortunate to make, I send you warmest Opposition greetings.

PS: Will you be kind enough to communicate my views also to comrade Lacroix? I am afraid he has created a wrong impression in the minds of some comrades (particularly comrade Gonzales in New York) by implying that I am in agreement with him on the French Ligue, and I have written him a few lines about my disassociation from such a standpoint. At the same time I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to comrade L. Trotsky for his information.



A Reply on Field and Weisbord

Letter by Leon Trotsky to the
CLA National Committee³⁸¹

20 October 1932

On October 6 the resident committee unanimously approved a letter to Trotsky, protesting his public collaboration with B.J. Field, who had been expelled from the CLA's New York branch earlier that year for indiscipline.³⁸² This is Trotsky's reply.

A statistician by training, after his expulsion Field traveled to Prinkipo and aided Trotsky, who was then gathering data for a projected book on American capitalism. While in Prinkipo, Field wrote several articles about the prospects for an upturn in the international economy. Trotsky wrote an introduction and circulated the articles for discussion in the ILO. Field's letters were published by some European ILO sections.

Cannon was particularly concerned about the Field case because it came shortly after Trotsky's intervention in the case of Weisbord, who earlier in the year also visited Prinkipo. After searching discussions with Trotsky, Weisbord abandoned his call for a bloc with the Right Opposition, and Trotsky then requested that the CLA seek a rapprochement with Weisbord's Communist League of Struggle. The CLS wrote a letter addressing Trotsky's programmatic concerns and the CLA National

*Committee published a lengthy response, recognizing that the CLS had made “a partial turn in the direction of the Left Opposition,” but insisting, “The Weisbord group has made a retreat from its old position, but it has done so in the worst possible way—without criticizing its former position or acknowledging its falsity.” The NC sought another CLS statement to “more seriously and more satisfactorily constitute a revision of its ideological baggage, especially on the questions of centrism and the bloc with the right wing.”*³⁸³

*The NC’s demand for clarification was not controversial in the resident committee.*³⁸⁴ Cannon, however, feared that Trotsky might demand more from the CLA. He wrote Dunne, “The action of comrade Trotsky in dealing independently with Weisbord—and I must say in misjudging and inflating the importance of this mountebank—created a new problem, or rather revived one that had been well disposed of.” He drew from the Weisbord and Field affairs “some very serious misgivings, not only in regard to our relations with the International Secretariat and with comrade Trotsky, but also in regard to the whole functioning of the Left Opposition as a real organization.”³⁸⁵ Cannon was very relieved to receive this letter.

This is in reply to your letter of 7 October 1932 on the Field question.

1. You seem to make a certain connection between the Field question and the Weisbord question. Therefore I must begin with the latter.

The Weisbord group formally appealed to the International Secretariat to intervene. Weisbord came to me on his own initiative. The International Secretariat wanted to know my opinion on this question, and I had no formal basis to avoid expressing my opinion, nor did I see a political reason to do so. It goes without saying that I considered it my duty in this particular, delicate case to do everything to strengthen the position and authority of the League vis-à-vis the Weisbord group. Meanwhile, I see no reason to regret all that was done in Prinkipo in this matter. As against the League, the Weisbord group had to recognize the incorrectness of its own position on the most important questions. That is a significant political gain. Your reply to Weisbord’s letter can only continue to strengthen your position and authority. I already observed this in the case of comrade Field: He recognized that your reply is tactful and correct. What complaint can you have in this case?

2. The Field case is completely different—simpler and more complicated. Simpler because we are dealing here with an individual comrade; more complicated because it seems that in this instance our practical goals seem not quite to correspond.

After discussions with comrade Glotzer, after articles on the subject in the *Militant*, and after conciliatory discussions with comrade Field, I had the firm impression that Field's collaboration in the League became more difficult and impossible not because you might see him as a politically or morally unworthy individual or a fundamentally alien type, but because his past has not prepared him for a leading role in a revolutionary organization, although he is impelled in this direction by virtue of his intellectual qualities. This contradiction, which occurs not infrequently, could be overcome in a large organization. But since the League remains a small pioneer organization, it feels compelled to resort to more drastic measures for self-preservation. That is approximately how I see the matter.

On the other hand, it seems to me that comrade Field, with his knowledge of economics and statistics, could perform a very significant service for the Left Opposition as a whole. We need someone who follows attentively the world economy day in, day out and who is capable of giving an accounting of it to himself and others. For quite a while I have looked for such an economic specialist in the Left Opposition, to no avail. I hardly think that we will soon find another with Field's qualifications.

Of course I have taken into account the importance of the fact that comrade Field was expelled by the New York local organization. But such a formal act as an expulsion must be evaluated not only formally but also politically. Someone can be expelled because he is a spy, another because he is inwardly corrupt, a third because he represents a tendency which is hostile in principle. But someone can also be expelled because, although honest and fully valuable in principle, he disrupts the unity of the organization under the given circumstances and threatens its capacity to act. In this last case (and that is the case with Field), it might be good to call upon the assistance of the international organization from the beginning in order to neutralize such a comrade for the national organization while not losing him. This is not a rebuke but more a suggestion for the future.

These are the general considerations from which I proceeded.

The cases of Landau, Gorkin, etc., which you cite and exploit with great polemical skill (which I personally enjoyed), are not decisive here. Landau was never expelled; he tried to expel the majority of his own organization. When objections were raised, he constituted his own faction. Two competing "Left Oppositions" were fighting over the supporters. In this instance, to abet Landau would really mean betraying our German organization.

Gorkin left the Left Opposition in order to make a pact with the most suspect political organizations, including the Right Opposition. According to the indictment of the Spanish comrades, Gorkin engaged in dirty personal dealings (involving money, etc.).

The Weisbord group can in a certain sense be classified as a competing organization. But in no case comrade Field. Also, Field did not make contact with Muste or the Lovestoneites against the League. This is a really big difference. The fact that he went around the leadership of the League is not correct from an organizational standpoint. The fact that he went to Europe to find his way to the Left Opposition does not speak against Field, but for him. This proves that he is serious about the issue.

All this led me, after very serious consideration, to send Field's work on America to the sections as discussion material. The work contains important ideas, is stimulating, and deserves to be read and discussed thoroughly. Even if it should come to an international decision in the case of Field, this work could serve as important informational material for the sections.

The fact that articles by comrade Field were published in the Opposition press without prior consultation with you is really not correct. For this I take the appropriate responsibility and, if you think it is useful, I am prepared to send all sections an appropriate apology.

But I insist that the Field question must be decided individually, not only from the standpoint of the organizational conflict in New York but also from the standpoint of the international organization.

I would appreciate it very much if you would translate this letter into English so that it is accessible to all members of the leadership.

Cannon Is Prepared to Break With the ILO

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky³⁸⁶

31 October 1932

Replying to the NC's request for further clarification, Weisbord wrote a lengthy document accusing the CLA leadership of "endless letter-writing as a maneuver" and disparaging the National Committee with ample use of material on the CLA's internal dispute from CLA Internal Bulletins nos. 1-3.³⁸⁷ On the day Shachtman wrote the letter below, the CLA National Committee wrote to the Communist League of Struggle to break off unity negotiations. The NC asserted, "Instead of a clear statement of its point of view in the sense we indicated, the reply of the Weisbord group takes a step backward in this respect and attempts to defend the errors which have separated it from us."³⁸⁸ The resident committee unanimously approved the break with Weisbord; a subcommittee of Cannon, Shachtman, and Swabek finalized the letter to the CLS.³⁸⁹ Trotsky subsequently agreed with the NC's negative assessment and wrote to Weisbord, "I cannot find your steps very happily chosen for the purpose, if the purpose remains fusion."³⁹⁰

I have for some time been unable to attend to an accumulated correspondence because of the work here and I hope you will excuse the long delay in replying to your letter.

With regard to your article for *Liberty*, I have seen Mr. Bye twice and spoken with him concerning it over the telephone several times.³⁹¹ He continued to assure me that there was not the slightest danger of *Liberty* deleting any section of the reply to its questionnaire. I have just heard from Bye that the second part of your reply has been received, and I have arranged with him that as soon as the editors of *Liberty* inform him of their decision, I shall in turn be informed so that any proposals they make about omitting sections of your article may be considered by me. If the editors accept it without any proposals concerning its contents, then my task is done without very much difficulty.

Foster's book on a "Soviet America" has already been forwarded to you by his publishers, the head of which has begged

me to inform her of any comment you may make on the book. Will you let me know if you have received the book from New York?

I am glad to learn that you are taking advantage of comrade Field's visit to Prinkipo to establish a collaboration with him which may produce a book on the United States. While the fundamental considerations advanced by you in *Europe and America* still retain their validity in the main, a good deal has nevertheless happened since it was written which makes the book sound out-of-date.³⁹² It is too bad that in this connection there should have developed a "Field incident," about which the National Committee of the League has already written to you. I would like to add my own voice here to observe that it is not with me a question of narrow pride and circle prestige which is involved, for, as comrade Field will recall, even at the time of his expulsion from the New York branch I proposed to him in my final remarks that although he would not be a member of the organization, he should find it possible to continue his literary collaboration with the *Militant*. But from that to the position of initiating our internal pre-international-conference discussion, without the regular procedure of taking an appeal against the decision of the American League, is something that could only—and has—create confusion among the comrades here. I hope this question will be clarified without it being magnified beyond all proportions.

By this time, I assume, you will have received the second statement of the Weisbord group, together with our final declaration, in which the further negotiations with his group are temporarily suspended by our National Committee until Weisbord takes the steps which we indicated to his group in our first reply. While I do not share Weisbord's exaggerated views as to what the League could accomplish as soon as he entered it (although the League *could* even now do far more than it is doing), or what he intends to contribute on his own accord, it would nevertheless have been preferable to have the earliest possible unification of the two organizations. On the basis of his two statements—and particularly of the second statement—of the Weisbord group however, such a possibility is for the moment excluded. I do not believe Weisbord has shown an attitude which would have helped the fusion of the groups. He continues to insist, for example, that his disagreement with the Opposition on the question of centrism was a "misun-

derstanding" or a matter of "formulation"—although not only his main thesis, but also his lengthy polemic against your thesis on the Russian question in which he challenged the existence of centrism in the Communist movement, plainly showed that the divergence between him and us was of a deep and irreconcilable nature. In his second statement also, he continues to dwell upon those same invented or exaggerated "differences" of a second- and tenth-rate character with that same violent bitterness of tone and accent which previously made it impossible for us to discuss objectively with him. I would suggest that you write Weisbord a personal letter along the line of the first one you sent to him. Some pointed remarks from you would undoubtedly help to make it clear to him that an approach to the League cannot be made successfully if he comes toward it by means of violent polemical attacks on insignificant questions without an honest statement of views on the principled differences which previously divided us.

At the same time, you should be aware that there is an opinion in the National Committee—which I do not share—that if the International Left Opposition insists upon the entry of Weisbord into the League, it will be necessary to break with the ILO on this point. While, to put it frankly, I cannot be very enthusiastic about the prospect of Weisbord entering the League with his present outlook and attitude, which would only create confusion and disruption in the organization, I am, however, certain that no greater harm could be done the Opposition in this country than to split from the ILO on such a question, and I intend, consequently, to resist any such tendencies (as expressed, among others, by comrade Cannon and his friends) to the maximum of my ability. That is not what the League "needs" at the present time. On the contrary, as is indicated by the constant financial crisis in the organization, the League must absolutely and immediately broaden its field of activities, participate more energetically in the general class struggle, and widen the base of its membership and sympathizers. The lack of such a broad basis is, at bottom, the cause for our financial and other difficulties. Up to now there has been a passive resistance to such a turn in our work, to which I pointed (you may recall) in the statement to the National Committee on the "Prospect and Retrospect" of the League, about five months ago. Any attempt made here to ignore this need will only increase the discontentment of the membership—at least a large section of

it—with the purely propagandistic activities of the League and the failure of some of the leading comrades to participate in the “schwarze Arbeit.” Weisbord could help to orient the League in this necessary direction, but only upon the condition of a change in his present venomous and disruptive attitude. As for myself, I am still willing to collaborate with him and his friends, as well as with all other comrades. Up to now Weisbord has made it impossible; I hope you will agree with me that a letter from you might help to improve the situation.

I am now engaged on a very ambitious undertaking, the writing of a history of the Comintern, for which I have been collecting material for some time. In English, there is no such work; in German, there are only a couple of worthless brochures. I need hardly say that I would be deeply grateful to you for any suggestions and aid you may find it possible to give me in this connection, and I am counting on it. Please give the enclosed self-explanatory note to comrade P. Frank.



Developments in Light of the Failed Co-optations

Letter by Max Shachtman to a Comrade³⁹³

26 November 1932

This letter is from the papers of Albert Glotzer, who left New York in October 1932 to seek a job in his native Chicago. Addressed “Dear comrade,” it was probably circulated to Shachtman faction supporters around the country.

Over the summer Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer had mounted a campaign against the plenum co-optations, circulating “Prospect and Retrospect” and corresponding with CLA members in Youngstown, Boston, and Chicago. Accusing Cannon and Swabeck of bureaucratic suppression of discussion and “old-Party maneuver,” Carl Cowl, Shachtman’s agent in Minneapolis, also took aim at the branch leadership: “Cannon’s support in Minneapolis is not merely conservative but on a number of

*decisive questions can only be described as opportunist.”*³⁹⁴ Cannon wrote to Dunne, “I have never seen a dirtier, more dishonest, more demagogic, and noncommunistic campaign than the one which has been waged by Shachtman-Abern-Glotzer, etc., since the plenum,” and explained:

*You may have thought it negligence on our part that we...have not even kept up any communication since the plenum. But that was more-or-less deliberate policy on our part. We thought it best to let the documentary matter sent out in the internal bulletins speak for itself.*³⁹⁵

Cannon and Swabeck retained a solid majority in Minneapolis, but the CLA membership nationally voted down the co-optations by a small margin.

Shachtman here reports on the resident committee meeting of November 25, where the results of the referendum were discussed. Given the failure of the co-optations, the committee voted (against the objections of Shachtman and Abern) to establish a Political Committee of Shachtman, Abern, Cannon, Oehler, and Swabeck.³⁹⁶ Cannon was commissioned to write a statement to the membership on the referendum results. Noting that the postplenum discussion was officially closed, the committee rejected a motion by Shachtman to circulate his own statement to the membership as well.

Trotsky had received a visa to travel to Copenhagen to give a lecture to a social-democratic student group on the Russian Revolution, his first opportunity to visit Europe since his exile from the USSR.³⁹⁷ At the November 25 meeting Shachtman and Abern voted against Cannon’s proposal to send Swabeck to Europe as an official CLA delegate empowered to “make proposals for a preliminary conference at this time when Trotsky can participate”; Shachtman protested that such a conference was impossible. All the same an informal meeting of Left Opposition supporters convened in Copenhagen in connection with Trotsky’s visit and resolved to hold an ILO preconference in Europe in December to prepare for the long-planned international conference.³⁹⁸ The preconference finally took place in February in Paris. Swabeck attended, but the Shachtman faction refused to help finance his trip.³⁹⁹

It is sometime since I have written on the situation as it stands today. It might therefore be well to touch on some of the questions which have arisen or developed since the National Committee plenum a half a year ago.

1. At last Wednesday night’s National Committee meeting—the first in three weeks!—the result of the plenum discussion in

the branches was finally reported. We had been demanding for months past that the scandalous situation in which a plenum of the NC took over five months to be reported on, discussed in the branches, and its results finally made known should be brought to an end. At each meeting the mechanical majority of the Cannon faction simply brushed aside our arguments. Despite every effort that was made, it was clear from the beginning that the League, while practically unanimous on the international question, wouldn't as a consequence support a factional reorganization of the NC as proposed in the so-called co-optations. For this reason, although the vote of the branches was fairly well-known months ago, the results were deliberately withheld so that the three "co-optees" might continue to sit and vote in the committee by purely factional and not League mandates. The discussion report rendered by Swabeck was really ludicrous; it attempted to draw no conclusions and showed that its real interest wasn't concerned with those questions over which the fight in the committee allegedly commenced, but that it was really aimed at an organizational victory which didn't materialize.

Even so, Swabeck tried to paint up the results. The Newark branch, which exists largely in the sky and is heard from only on holiday occasions, had originally cast four votes for co-optations under Basky's tutelage; Swabeck reported five Newark votes. Philadelphia, where Cannon's faction leader, Morgenstern, manages without difficulty to reconcile his membership on the National Committee of the Bolshevik-Leninists with marriage by a Jewish rabbi and all the accompanying religious rites, originally cast seven votes for co-optations; Swabeck reported nine.¹⁰⁰ Kansas City, where there is only one member, comrade Buehler, and has been only one for the last three years—as both Swabeck and Glotzer reported after their tours, confirmed by the report of Clarke when he was located in KC—the branch suddenly acquired two new members, making a total of three for co-optations. St. Louis, where the four comrades originally voted against the co-optations, a little "moral suasion" was exercised until the branch a couple of weeks ago changed its vote into the opposite. This will give you some idea as to why the report to the NC was delayed for such an unprecedented period of time. And, in spite of all this juggling, the co-optations were nevertheless rejected by the membership as a whole.

By this vote it would appear the membership had expressed

its opposition to Cannon's attempt at reorganizing the committee on a factional basis. Nevertheless, after reporting the results, the committee majority jammed through a motion, establishing a "political committee" of Cannon, Oehler, Swabeck, Abern, and Shachtman, in place of the old resident committee, which means that absent members will now be replaced by faction substitutes. To such a victory they are entirely welcome. It is not a victory against an opposing faction but a victory against the League and what it stands for.

2. At the same committee meeting, without any previous discussion or announcement, Swabeck proposed in an offhand manner that since comrade Trotsky was on his way to Copenhagen and there *might* be an international conference held there, a delegate should immediately be sent to represent the American League; the delegate of course is to be Swabeck. If you want an example of the truly light-minded manner in which important international questions are really approached by the Cannon-Swabeck faction, this little episode—which is not so little—gives it to you in one installment. Just think of the situation: That same evening Swabeck brought to the attention of the committee the draft outline sent by the International Secretariat on the various points which the theses for our international conference are to contain. It is a carefully elaborated document and each national section has been allotted a portion of it to work out through the medium of a subcommittee. When the full draft is ready the whole Opposition is to discuss it so that when the conference actually convenes it will be thoroughly prepared to adopt the definitive platform of the international Left. This is the only way to proceed. Swabeck's proposal to leave for Denmark immediately ignores and blows up this whole procedure. It is based upon a piece of wildcat speculation which makes a caricature of genuine international relations.

In the first place, a preliminary conference in Copenhagen has no point to it whatever. What purpose would it fulfill? What would be its agenda? What time is allotted to make its convention possible—not on paper but in Copenhagen? Swabeck is supposed to leave immediately. Our letter to the secretariat proposing the preliminary conference is only now being sent. The secretariat must communicate with the various national sections for their approval. *If* this fantastic proposal is approved, the delegates to the so-called preliminary conference would probably arrive in Copenhagen in

time for the international skiing match, but not for a conference with the already departed comrade Trotsky. We have no idea as to just how long the Danish social democrats will allow comrade Trotsky to stay. It is not at all impossible that Swabeck will still be on the high seas when comrade Trotsky is already on his way back to Prinkipo. The whole enterprise is so truly speculative, unsound, and irresponsible as to make argument against it quite unnecessary.

Our counter motions, which aimed at setting up a subcommittee to work seriously on preparations for our long-delayed international conference which is now really under way, were accepted purely for the record. The committee decided, it is true, for such a subcommittee, but the plan is that Swabeck shall leave in all likelihood before the committee has even started to work. As a matter of fact it was only as an afterthought and for the record that Oehler made a motion for a document on the American situation to be drawn up for Swabeck to take along. You can imagine the value of such a document. It will be drawn up with all the haste and superficiality of a newspaper article only in order that it may later be said that Swabeck took along a thesis. As for preliminary discussion on that mountain of problems with which we are faced in the International Left Opposition, there will of course be none.

The real purpose of the trip, it is clear, is factional, nor can it have any other purpose. To this end the branches are now supposed to make a speedy collection of funds at a time when the sheriffs are literally at our door every day and the appearance of each issue of the *Militant* is accomplished only by miracles and our debts rise increasingly. I would never oppose Swabeck's taking a trip to see comrade Trotsky on his own hook, because I find nothing wrong with that, either now, in the past, or in the future. Nor are my objections based upon financial considerations alone, because if there were a real need at the present time (as there undoubtedly will be when the international conference is actually called), the League would have to make every effort to raise the necessary funds regardless of their difficulties.

Abern and I appealed the decision of the resident committee to the full committee, requesting that no action be taken in the meantime. This procedure was followed in 1930 when Cannon objected to the decision that Shachtman should go across. But this time, while we have a "right to appeal," the decision is being car-

ried into effect in the meantime. I hope the other NC members will express themselves on this question in no uncertain terms.

3. The situation in the New York branch is becoming increasingly tense. I hope none of the comrades is taking the attitude that this is a storm in a teapot; that nothing is wrong anywhere except in NY. Such an attitude, besides being provincial, would signify that we are ignoring one of the central points around which the whole League is now being kept in a dangerous factional war. The imperfections and shortcomings of the NY branch are undeniable, but in general they are certainly not greater than those of our other branches. In many respects the NY branch is markedly superior. Its greatest "defect" in the eyes of the Cannon faction is that it refuses to accept blindly all the mistakes, prejudices, and procedures of that faction. By its very nature, the Opposition draws into its ranks as a general rule the most critical of the Communist elements. As a reaction to the dead calm and compulsory obedience that prevails in the Party, this attitude sometimes becomes supercritical. What is decisive, however, is that this reaction is a healthy one. In the Opposition, even more than in the Party, we must keep in mind every minute of the day Lenin's precepts on discipline, leadership, policy, ranks, and their interconnection as set down in that excellent passage in *"Left-Wing" Communism*. Had the Cannon faction conducted itself with Lenin's penetrating views in mind, the situation in the NY branch would automatically have improved 100 percent.

Just one example: When the comrades rise in the NY branch to criticize the NC for publishing a program on unemployment only after more than three years of the crisis, the criticism is not dealt with objectively, the defect is not acknowledged, but instead a violent and abusive offensive is launched against the critics. It is this bureaucratic attitude, and not "Shachtmanism" or "Carterism," which has aggravated the NY situation to its present pitch.

The Cannon group has met the situation in the good, old-fashioned manner of the Bolshevization era in the Party.⁴⁰¹ From its adherents, big and small, we hear: The branch must be purged. The division in the branch is based upon the struggle between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie in which, needless to say, Cannon represents the proletariat. It is a fight between the young upstarts and the old, experienced, stable leaders. One Cannon

supporter has even developed, on the floor of the branch, the theory that after four years of existence the League is going through a period of Thermidorian reaction in the NY branch!

For these and similarly profound reasons, every effort has been made to gain a faction majority for Cannon in the NY branch executive. Several weeks ago the elections produced the opposite result. By a purely arbitrary exercise of its power the NC ordered the discarding of four votes which would have given the Cannonites an additional branch executive member. The branch decided to circumvent this faction trick by holding new elections. The results are as follows: Weber (32), Saul (32), Milton (31), Lewit (30), Bleeker (30), Capelis (30), Sterling (29), Petras (29), Orland (21), Oehler (20), Stamm (19). Only the last two are Cannon supporters. In the previous election there were three.

The failure to get a faction majority in the branch is rendering the Cannon group desperate. We have made every effort to collaborate with them in the practical work. I need point only to the fact that against the desires of many comrades we argued for putting in Oehler as full-time organizer of the branch, in spite of the fact that he has acted in an unbelievable factional manner during his whole tenure of office. The Cannon group on the other hand has stopped at nothing to disrupt the branch work. With hardly a single exception the branch activities for the past months have had to expend hour after hour in sterile discussions over purely factional issues artificially injected by Cannon to keep the branch in a state of turmoil so that it may be discredited. They have now reached the point where in the National Committee meetings, as well as on the branch floor, they make open threats of expulsions. It is unnecessary to state that we intend to resist any splitting of the organization, no matter what guise it may assume. Expulsion of groups of comrades is one of those guises.

4. Just a word on Weisbord. With the acceptance of my motion in a recent committee meeting, negotiations with Weisbord have been suspended, for the time being at least. His stubborn refusal to meet our proposals seriously and honestly, his ridiculous and unworthy diplomacy on questions of his past standing in regard to centrism and the bloc with the right wing—to say nothing of his violent attitude in general—made further negotiations impossible. It is now up to Weisbord exclusively. If he finds it possible to restate his position in a politically satisfactory manner, then I am not

opposed to resuming the negotiations and making his entry into the League a comparatively easy matter. This does not mean that I have any illusions about Weisbord. While he has a tremendous capacity for work which the League can utilize and which it wouldn't hurt some "leaders" to emulate—this quality is largely outweighed by other negative features. Assuming that Weisbord finally enters the League, there are two possible outcomes: One is that he proves to be alien to our movement, unassimilable and undesirable. This would mean that the experiment has failed and that we part company. The other alternative is that Weisbord is absorbed into the stream of the Opposition, his negative features are substantially modulated, and the League is able to profit by his positive qualities. In our present weak state the second alternative is of course preferable.

All of this is based upon a very serious and at present not yet visible change in Weisbord. Even LD has written some letters in which he expresses a dissatisfaction with Weisbord's procedure since he returned from Turkey. This may have an effect on Weisbord. In connection with this question I have been approached—not once—with the proposal that come what may and regardless of what position Weisbord takes, he should under no circumstances be admitted into the League, even if our refusal may mean "temporarily" a break with LD, and the International Secretariat. I think such an attitude (that is, if it should come to that) would be a guarantee of the League's ruin in a short time. And I for one will not go along with it. To break with the International Secretariat and LD over the Weisbord question, even assuming that we disagreed with their position, would mean to reduce the League to a tiny, nationally limited sect, consumed by internal wrangling and rendered impotent. Our international relations are the cement which not only holds the League together today, but prevents it from departing from the line of the Left Opposition. I have no hesitation in saying frankly that there is no limit to my fears of the consequence if the League under the Cannon faction leadership were left to sail on a national lake; the first substantial wind could then drive it to strange shores, that is, if the ship even held together.

5. Many comrades have raised the question of a conference in the early future. I myself am beginning to incline in that direction. First it is necessary to work out a program to be submitted to the National Committee. Such a program must not only

constitute a critical analysis of the past, taking stock both of our internal developments and external policy, but it must contain concrete proposals as to the sharp change in our policy (also both internally and externally) which is so urgently necessary now, which is generally acknowledged in words, but about which precious little is being done. For example, our proposal that either Swabeck or Oehler go to the mine fields during that critical period of the struggle where such excellent possibilities were afforded the Left Opposition, instead of sending two young and inexperienced comrades, was rejected by the NC, which doesn't, however, spare any phrases about the need of a "turn" in our work.¹⁰² Swabeck and Oehler, they say, were needed for work in the office. Besides, Swabeck was soon to go on a national tour which would cover the mine fields. The national tour has meanwhile been replaced by—or shall I say expanded into?—the international tour! How much of the internal situation would a conference solve? If it left the status quo it would solve nothing; worse than that, it would give its stamp of approval to the present intolerable situation. But if a conference could make the necessary changes in our work, in our external policy, in our internal regime; if it would in concrete reality, and not merely on paper, turn the face (and the hands and feet) of the League toward far more energetic and militant participation in the class struggle, then it would undoubtedly mark a milestone in the progress of the American Opposition.

I am very anxious to hear the opinions you may have on this subject. This brief survey leaves many questions untouched. I hope to deal with them on another occasion.

Mobilize Against Swabeck's Trip to Europe

Letter by Max Shachtman to a Comrade¹⁰³

2 December 1932

Addressed "Dear comrade" and found in the papers of Albert Glotzer, this letter was probably circulated to Shachtman supporters nationally.

Last night's meeting of the National Committee makes necessary this hasty postscript to the letter I sent you on November 26. Being ill, I could not attend the meeting myself, but Marty was present during the whole session. The only question of real importance dealt with there was the proposed trip across of Swabeck. What the Cannon faction decided last night confirmed to an iota and in every respect the views I advanced in my last letter!

In the most casual and offhand manner, it was reported that in all likelihood comrade Trotsky would be compelled to leave Denmark in a comparatively few days. In addition, it seems that we have a letter from Trotsky himself informing us that his stay in Denmark is to be of brief duration. These two intelligences by themselves, one would think, should suffice to deprive the proposed voyage of even that meager foundation which was originally advanced for it. When it was first advanced (about a week ago), the argument presented for the dispatch of a delegate, posthaste, centered exclusively around the argument that "only an idiot" would imagine that Trotsky went to Denmark "merely to deliver a lecture"; that the real purpose of it was for Trotsky to get closer to the European Opposition so that a "preliminary international conference" might be held in Copenhagen. We, on our part, argued that the whole enterprise was purely speculative, based on sheer impulse (and factional considerations), and that even if such a conference were held, the haste and suddenness would deprive it of any significance whatsoever; that the membership of the international Opposition would not have the slightest opportunity to discuss the burning problems that confront us. We said that Copenhagen not only did *not* offer any advantages over Prinkipo, but certain distinct disadvantages. As late as last Tuesday, at the

New York branch meeting, Oehler reported on the committee decision, repeating the formula that this had to be done without delay because "we take it for granted" that there will be a conference, since that was the real purpose in Trotsky's mind when he left for Denmark.

Without batting an eyelash, however, Cannon and Swabeck yesterday reversed themselves without the slightest explanation. Cannon moved that if Trotsky leaves for Turkey, then Swabeck should proceed to Prinkipo! If the "preliminary conference" is to be held in Prinkipo—that is, in a locality where the factor of time pressure is eliminated, in contrast to Copenhagen—then every genuine basis for the trip at this time is removed. There remains *only* the factional basis. If Cannon's faction wants to send Swabeck to Trotsky, I have not the slightest objection. I object to the cynical hypocrisy of sending him as an "official delegate" to a non-existent "preliminary conference." In view of this latest turn in the situation, I think it imperative for every branch of the League (yours in particular) to adopt a resolution of protest or criticism against the enterprise, not so much on "financial grounds" (which are after all subsidiary, even if not unimportant, considerations), but on the grounds that the genuine international conference is in the process of preparation and that the membership must have the opportunity to discuss the questions at length, prepare the documents in a carefully considered manner, and then decide the question of delegates when the date for the conference is actually fixed. This is the only way in which to prepare for a real international conference so that it may have the necessary authority and prestige when its labors are concluded. The plan for the "preliminary conference"—for which no agenda has even been proposed, for which no documents are being prepared, for which no organizational arrangements have been or can have been made—is not merely a caricature, is not merely inconsequential from any standpoint, but still worse, it is merely the formality that masks an exclusively factional purpose. It drips with the odor of those trips made by the various caucus leaders in former years in the American Party, ostensibly to attend "international plenums or congresses," but in actuality to "beat comrade X or Y to the draw," that is, to get a factional advantage by reaching Moscow in sufficient advance time to be the first to reach the central apparatus men. That Trotsky will not be a party to such a trick—for he does

not operate that way, nor can the Bolshevik-Leninists operate that way—goes without saying. It may serve as enlightenment to report that Stamm gave away the game by telling me: “I can easily understand why you are afraid (?!) of having Trotsky see Swabeck. Up to now the Old Man has seen the face of only two National Committee members, Glotzer’s and yours. You have everything to lose by his (i.e., LD’s) seeing Swabeck”! Why I should “have everything to lose” by such a historical meeting, I cannot figure out. I *do* know that we have all talked more than once of what a good thing it would be for LD to make the personal acquaintance of Swabeck and Cannon. But that does not alter the need of standing up against the present proposal. It is a different thing entirely. If the Cannon faction is not interested in having the League pass through a thorough discussion prior to the sending of an international delegate—then at the very least the League members should make it quite clear that they do not regard Swabeck’s delectateship as proper or representative of their opinions.

Swabeck, in his haste to depart (even though the office is on the verge of collapse, induced by an acute financial and organizational crisis), plans to leave in about ten days. From this you will see how necessary it is for the branches to act at their very next meeting and to send in a formal expression of opinion concerning this whole scandalous procedure.



We Want More Direct Contact

Letter by Arne Swabeck to the
International Secretariat and Leon Trotsky⁴⁰¹

16 December 1932

In our letter of December 8 we informed you of the decision of our National Committee to send comrade Swabeck to Europe as an international delegate. At the time the decision was made, we were under the impression, from press dispatches, that comrade Trotsky had been granted a three months’ visa by the Danish government, with the possibility of a longer stay there. Naturally we

thought such a prolonged visit of comrade Trotsky to western Europe would be utilized to strengthen the contact of the various sections of the Left Opposition with him and with each other, and thereby put a firmer foundation on the preparations for the international conference.

From that point of view the National Committee decided to raise a special fund to send comrade Swabeck to Denmark and authorized him to propose the holding of a *preliminary conference* of representatives of the leading sections with comrade Trotsky, if circumstances made it feasible.

A few days later we learned from a letter from the International Secretariat that the Danish visa was for eight days only. The National Committee thereupon decided to reaffirm its decision regarding the international delegate, with the amendment that comrade Swabeck proceed directly first to Prinkipo, in case comrade Trotsky returned there. The visit of comrade Trotsky to Denmark had not been the fundamental consideration of the National Committee in its first decision, but only a special circumstance facilitating and hastening an action which had been too long delayed for one practical reason or another.

To our surprise and indignation, comrades Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer opposed the decision to send comrade Swabeck to Europe and organized a furious campaign in the ranks of the League against it. With casuistic arguments which *contrast* our suggestion of a preliminary conference of the representatives of the most important sections with comrade Trotsky to a regularly organized international conference, with theses published in advance, full discussion in the sections, etc., they are creating the impression in the ranks, especially among the less experienced comrades, that the decision of the National Committee to send an international delegate to Europe, before the international conference is definitely scheduled, is an abnormal and indefensible action. In some of the agitation around this question on the part of the supporters of comrade Shachtman, there is to be noted a decidedly ugly nuance from an internationalist point of view. It is painful to report, on top of all this, that the special fund asked for by the National Committee to finance the trip abroad is systematically sabotaged—the comrades influenced by the Shachtman gossip, among whom are to be found most of those still having an income, are all declining to contribute. This latter circumstance



1. James P. Cannon
and Red Army soldiers at time of
Comintern Sixth Congress, 1928.



2. Max Shachtman,
Berlin, 1930.



3. Youthful supporters of Communist Party's Cannon faction, Chicago, 1927.
From left: Gil Green, Carl Cowl, Max Shachtman, Albert Glotzer.
In background: Nathan Schaffner (Foster supporter).



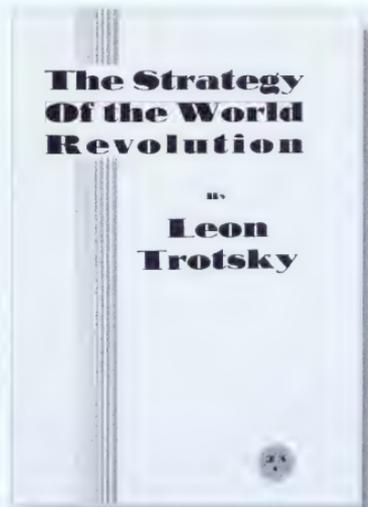
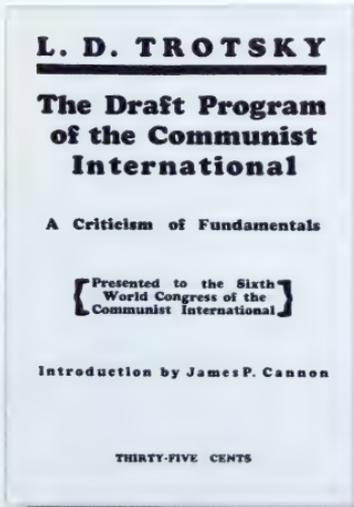
4. Arne Swabeck at his desk, CLA headquarters, New York, 1934.



5. Mural painted by Diego Rivera in CLA headquarters, New York, 1933.

Upper row (from left): Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht,
Friedrich Engels, Leon Trotsky, V. I. Lenin, Karl Marx.

Lower row (from left): Ruth Cannon (daughter of James P. Cannon),
Sarah Avrin, Edgar Swabeck (son of Arne Swabeck), Carlo Cowl (son of Sarah Avrin),
Arne Swabeck, Max Shachtman, Christian Rakovsky, James P. Cannon.



6. CLA published Trotsky's 1928 Critique of the draft program of the CI in two parts. Left: Sections brought by Cannon from Moscow (1929). Right: Pamphlet contains "Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch" (1930).



7. From left: Martin Abern, Vincent R. Dunne, Carl Skoglund, Maurice Spector, Arne Swabeck,
Max Shachtman, all full members of CLA National Committee, 1931-34.

Full NC members not present: James P. Cannon, Albert Glotzer, Hugo Oehler.

8. *Sylvia Bleeker and
Morris Lewit,
New York, 1920s.*



9. *Martin Abern and his
wife, Lydia, 1930s.*



10. *Early leaders of Canadian
Communist Party (from left):
Tim Buck, Jack MacDonald,
and Maurice Spector.*



11. *Christian Rakovsky*



12. *Andrés Nin*



13. *Léon Lesoil*



14. *Kurt Landau*



15. *Josef Frey*



16. *Oskar Seipold*



17. *Pierre Frank*



18. *Raymond Molinier*



19. *Pietro Tresso*



20. Leon Trotsky (center) with Pierre Naville (left), Gérard Rosenthal, and Denise Naville, Prinkipo, early 1930s.

21. From left: Jan Frankel, Leon Sedov, Natalya Sedova, Jiri Kopp (Czechoslovakian Trotskyist), and Leon Trotsky, Prinkipo, 1930.



22. Trotsky at his desk in Prinkipo with Alfred Rosmer.



Leon Trotsky
THE PERMANENT
REVOLUTION

Translated by
Max Shachtman

qp

PIONEER PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK, 1931

Leon Trotsky
PROBLEMS OF
THE CHINESE
REVOLUTION

With Appendices by Zisoviev, Vujevitch, Nansonov
& Others

*Translated with
an Introduction
by Max Shachtman*

qp

PIONEER PUBLISHERS
New York, 1932

Leon Trotsky

WHAT NEXT?
VITAL QUESTIONS FOR THE GERMAN
PROLETARIAT

Translated from the Russian by Joseph V. Paster

qp

Pioneer Publishers
New York, 1931

28. Books (above) and pamphlets by Trotsky,
part of the CLA's ambitious publishing program.

Leon Trotsky

In Defense of
the Russian
Revolution

Speech Delivered at Copenhagen
December 1932

Leon Trotsky

**THE SPANISH
REVOLUTION
IN DANGER!**

LEON TROTSKY
Communism
and
Syndicalism

*On the Trade
Union Question*

15 cents

Communist League of America
(Opposition)

Shall Fascism Really Be Victorious?

Germany

The Key to the International
Situation

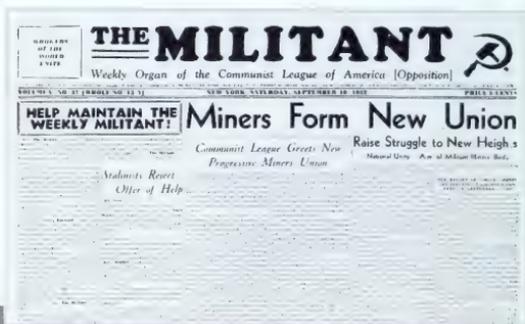
20 cents

LEON TROTSKY



29. CLA member Gerry Allard, editor of Progressive Miner.

30. Militant (10 September 1932) hailed PMA founding.
Springfield, October 1932:
15,000 Illinois miners rally for
PMA union recognition.





THE PROGRESSIVE MINER

GENERAL STRIKE LOOMS!

NATIONAL GUARDS RUSH TO MINE AREAS AND ARREST MEMBERS OF PROGRESSIVE MINERS OF AMERICA

FEARFUL GUARDS ATTACKED PICKETS AFTER GANNETT P.K.A.

SLAIN AUXILIARY MEMBER

Progressive Miners' Union Issues Ultimatum to Horner; Appeal to American Workers

20,000 Progressive Members Ready to Walk out

PERRY COUNTY MINERS HOLD HUGE MEETING

10,000 PEOPLE HEAR OVERT OF SPEAKERS

Thousands of Men and Families Attend Funeral of Slain Woman Member

Legislative Police

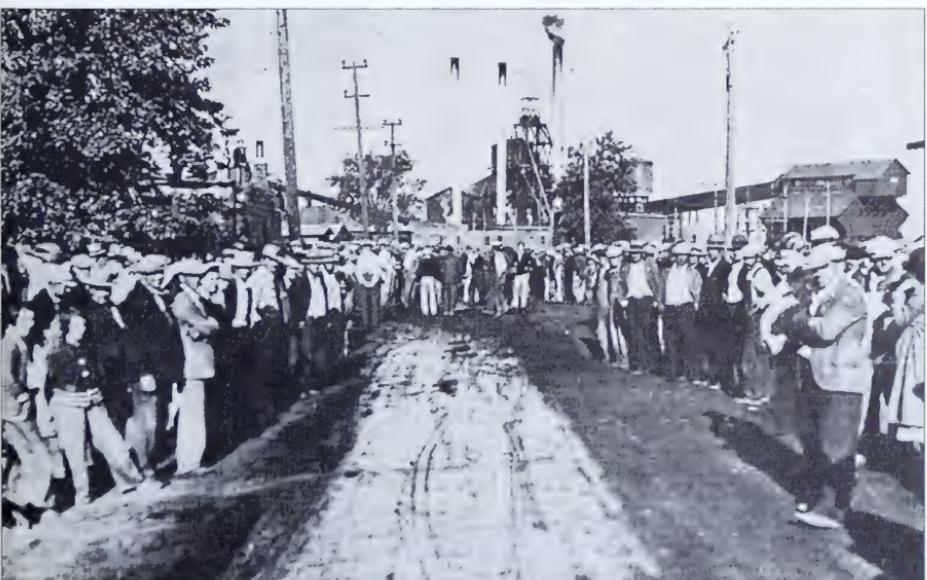
Diarm Lewis

Walker Gunner

CELEBRATE MINERS' DONATE DAY

WAGES

31. March of PMA women's auxiliary, 1933. PMA journal Progressive Miner (13 January 1933) reports murder of auxiliary member by Peabody Coal Company gunmen.



32. Progressive Miners of America picket at Peabody mine near Taylorville, Illinois, fall 1932.



33. CLA contingent in May Day demonstration, New York, 1934.

Workers Came to this Historic Mass Meeting of the Left Opposition

FOR A NEW COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL!

A New Communist Party for America!

The Second and the Third Internationals Have Proved Bankrupt. The Capitulation of the Social Democracy and Stalinism in Germany Has Produced the Catastrophe of Fascism.

The Class Conscious Socialist and Communist Workers Are Seeking a Way Out of the Crisis in the International Proletarian Movement.

The Working Class of the World Can Be United For Victorious Struggle Only by the Re-Assembling of Its Militant Vanguard.

The Left Opposition Has Come Out for the Formation of a New Communist International and of New Communist Parties State Defeated, Only by the Re-Assembling of the Militant Vanguard.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Learn What Is Happening in the Third International, What Took Place at the Congress of the Second International, What Was Done at the Famous Paris Conference of Left-Socialist and Independent Communist Parties and Groups.

SPEAKERS:

JAMES P. CANNON

National Secretary of the Communist League (Opposition)

MAX SHACHTMAN

Recently Returned From an Extensive Visit to Europe

on Saturday, September 30, 1933, 3 pm. Sharp, at Irving Plaza Hall, Irving Place and 15th St.

Admission: 15 cents.

Auspices: Manhattan Branch of the Communist League of America (Opposition)
126 East 16th Street, New York.

Read the MILITANT, Weekly Organ of the Left Opposition. 5 cents a Copy

MAY DAY

Union Square and Madison Square -- Why Two Demonstrations on May Day?

Why Does the Communist League (International Communists) March in the May Day Parade with the Trade Union and Socialist Organizations?

Which Is the Road to the United Front of the Workers?

MASS MEETING

Tuesday, May 1, 1934, at 8 P.M.

Speakers:

JAMES P. CANNON **ARNE SWABECK**
CARL COWL **GEORGE CLARK**
REVA CRAINE

IRVING PLAZA HALL

(Grand Ballroom)

15th Street and Irving Place

ADMISSION 15 CENTS

UNEMPLOYED FREE

USPICES: NEW YORK LOCAL COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA

(Over)

34. Flyer for September 1933 CLA forum on International Left Opposition's turn toward founding new parties and a new international (left); flyer for May 1934 meeting to explain CLA's decision to march in SP-initiated May Day parade.

35. New York hotel strike, early 1934. Militant went triweekly during strike.



36. Hotel workers leaders. B. J. Field, with telephone, was expelled from CLA for violating party discipline during strike. Others (from left): James Gordon, Charles Fairbanks, Emile Smith, Alexander Costas.



37. Shachtman and Cannon during 1934 strike in Minneapolis, where both were arrested.



38. Pickets confront scabberding deputy, 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strike. Strike leaders included CLA NC members Vince Dunne and Carl Skoglund.



39. *Shachtman and Cannon in Paris at time of founding of Fourth International, 1938.*

puts extraordinary difficulties in the way of the early execution of the National Committee decision and compels a postponement of comrade Swabeck's journey. With the present financial difficulties of the League and the burden it places on the membership, the collection of a special fund sufficient to finance the trip to Europe without full cooperation will unavoidably be a slow process.

However, we remain firm in our determination to strengthen our international relations by direct and official representation and will carry it out at all costs. The deep internal crisis of the League, which has grown steadily worse since the plenum despite the unanimous agreements there, is only one of the considerations prompting our decision. For a long time we have felt the necessity of more direct contact, through a qualified representative, with comrade Trotsky, with the International Secretariat, and with the leading bodies of the most important sections in Europe.

We have not had an official delegate abroad in this capacity since the early part of 1930—nearly three years ago. (The journeys of comrades Shachtman and Glotzer last year were undertaken solely on their own responsibility and financed by private funds. It is not necessary to speak of the unprofitable results of these journeys. But it is worth remarking that comrades who construed international relations in such a lighthearted and personal manner are precisely the ones to raise objections to the formal decision of the National Committee of the League to send its secretary to Europe as an official representative.)

We have had reasons more than once to feel that the international contacts of the League were far from adequate. Comrade Trotsky's statement in his letter of May 27 that "It is unfortunate that you have no reliable comrade in Europe to represent your organization in the secretariat" did not pass unnoticed, and we have been seeking a way out of our practical difficulties to make such a representation possible—at least for a certain period.⁴⁰⁵

To a certain extent, meantime, we have found ourselves isolated from the international movement. The developments within the most important European sections in recent times remain insufficiently known to us. It is needless to add also that we have felt most acutely the necessity of personal discussion with comrade Trotsky and the leading comrades of other sections in regard to the new problems which the situation of American imperialism is posing in all their magnitude. It is inconceivable to us that

grown-up Communists can say—and mean it honestly—that the necessary interchange of information and opinion on these and other questions has to wait for the international conference.

Concerning the internal crisis of the League: In the *Internal Bulletin* nos. 1, 2, and 3, which were forwarded to you after the plenum, the essence of the conflicts is indicated. All that has happened since the plenum, deepening and aggravating the crisis, has proceeded along the same line in substance, if not in form.

On the international question comrade Shachtman corrected himself at the plenum and subscribed to the National Committee resolution. But that did not prevent him from transferring to the League the same false methods of approach that led him astray in the European questions, and—it must be said plainly—some of the methods of those whom he covered or supported, directly or indirectly, in Europe.

The National Committee majority is struggling to raise up a cadre capable of estimating questions from a fundamental political standpoint and orientate itself accordingly. Comrade Shachtman, by his actions, directly contradicts this process. This, in one word, is the basic cause of the conflict from our point of view.

At the plenum he joined us in condemnation of the Carter group as representing a scholastic and harmful tendency. After the plenum the Carter group abstained from voting on the international resolution on the ground of insufficient information, although all the material at the disposal of the National Committee was given to the entire membership in mimeographed bulletins. By this abstention they did not mean to support the disintegrators in Europe. But with true scholasticism, they looked for “information” down to the last detail and overlooked entirely the fact that a struggle was taking place in the European sections which concerned the life of the International Left Opposition and which required every Oppositionist to take a stand. This action of the Carter group—since supplemented by direct attacks upon our international resolution—has not in the least drawn comrade Shachtman closer to the majority of the National Committee as against this group. On the contrary, he maintains a close bloc with this group to struggle against the National Committee.

The National Committee is engaged in a conflict with a group of comrades in Boston who reject our trade-union policy (in the needle trades in which they are employed) from a standpoint of

ultraleftism which, in the given situation, converts them into virtual camp followers of the Stalinist "Third Period" dogmas. Comrade Shachtman's trade-union policy is identical with ours, but he forms a factional unity with the Boston comrades against us. This muddles up and sabotages the fundamental conflict and strengthens the comrades in their prejudices.

These two examples do not by any means exhaust the question of the postplenum disputes, but they indicate their fundamental character and explain, what is yet confusing to many comrades, why the League has a violent internal struggle "without political differences." We are now drawing up a document on the conflict since the plenum. All material will be submitted to the international organization so that all the sections can have the necessary information and be in a position to express their opinions before the conference of the League to be scheduled later.

PS: Enclosed you will find copies of comrade Shachtman's motion in the NC and the resolutions adopted in some branches along the same line and at his instigation.



Cannon Overreaches Himself

Letter by Maurice Spector to Max Shachtman⁴⁰⁶

29 December 1932

1. Last night our branch unanimously rejected the proposal to send Swabeck on an ambiguous trip to Prinkipo. The grounds are the absence of convincing and substantial political reasons. The executive is instructed to draw up a resolution for New York, which could be sent as soon as possible. I have myself never received a copy of your appeal.⁴⁰⁷ Swabeck neglected to enclose it, and in a second letter he apologized for his absent-mindedness and again omitted to enclose it! It is this hiatus which has delayed my recording my stand. I cannot truthfully say that I have seen your appeal at least formally. But perhaps I shall let that go, and cast my vote on the basis of what knowledge I have of it from your other letters.

2. I am somewhat disappointed, however, that under the circumstances, I had (judiciously, I believe) to withdraw a suggestion that you come here for a week's stay. I was going to make it coincide with a banquet we are arranging for the 7th. At any other time, the suggestion would have carried without the slightest hesitation. But it came on the heels of the rejection of Swabeck's trip, and the feeling was expressed by Mac, principally, that your coming, especially as it was not on the initiative of the center, would be construed as a continued factional maneuver. The defect in this argument is patent. Cannon/Swabeck have long ago decided where to put the Toronto branch. I could in all likelihood by more vigorous intervention have still swung the decision in favor of your visit. I did not deem it wise, for the same reasons that our branch had to delay its vote on the plenum co-optations for so long, because I prefer to carry the branch with us instead of a split vote. More particularly, it is always a marked advantage to us if we can get the support of MacDonald, as we did on the co-optations and now on the Swabeck trip. The branch is built around our collaboration, that is not to say that if questions of principle emerge on which we differ that we will slur them over in the interests of a false harmony. But that is not the situation today.

Of course, if the center were to send you, the demur of "factional interpretation" would lose its point. This matter of your trip to Toronto is worth some more attention. One way or another, it should be made to materialize, while at the same time protecting it from any formal objections that it is not correct (in the diplomatic sense of the word).

Marty raises the Krehm matter again. Swabeck does so monotonously and purposefully. Our branch is sending a resolution to New York on that, rejecting the miserable proposal of a couple of months ago—that "comrade Spector" and "comrade Green" get together to talk matters over. If you recall, the resident committee's resolution in one sentence complimented us on our good work. Sentence two: Krehm and co. were stigmatized as having proven themselves more irresponsible. Sentence three: "Get together." In the name of everything, what kind of conclusion is this? From what premises? Are acts of disruption, refusal to accept plenum decisions, slanderous letters, degeneracy, etc., to be followed by no consequences in the Opposition? Is all that is necessary a verbal profession of acceptance of a "platform"? My

dear Max, there *is* no Krehm group, there has not been, there cannot be! This little clique of 37th-class pseudopoliticians have no standing, have not done a stroke of work, have not met more than once or twice since the plenum, have vilified us, and have carried on anti-Opposition activity. This is neither a Field nor a Weisbord element; it is an insult to the intellectual caliber of either of these to compare them with both. In a word, they should have been suspended or expelled from the organization for their postplenum conduct. They were not even censured. We loyally stood by the plenum commitments. But since then much water has flowed under the bridge and I refuse to recognize them as a "group." One or two can find work in the LO, if they apply to us for membership. Their applications will receive attention on their merits. Others who apply, like Roth or Yolles, I shall frankly oppose. But more material will be available for you when you scan my letter to Swabeck, and also the resolution.

3. As to the conference: Al correctly writes me from Chicago that he feels a conference on the lines of the last plenum would be worse than useless. There is no magic in conferences. The prerequisite for any conference results must be a fresh analysis of conditions, the formulation of the new problems, definition of objectives, and proposals for action. If we can accompany our project of a conference with such a political preparation, it is justified. But candidly, I lack enthusiasm for a conference that will merely retrace the history of the organization and the lamentable record of Cannon's passivity and sabotage. To a certain extent, I am influenced by the fact that the LO in Toronto at least is drawing in fresh people, whose polemical education must be based on something more solid than what they might regard as hearsay. The estimation of the groupings, the characterization of the leaders, must always renew itself in the light of experience. It is not I that needs to be convinced, nor you, but the organization. I regret nothing, but you know as well as I do, my friend, that we were an extremely fortunate little band at the last plenum. We should all have been decorated with the order of the horseshoe (first class). I came to NY with the handicap for the NY colleagues of a wretched internal fight in Toronto. Marty (I know he is too honest to take umbrage at what I say), a prey to this impossible inferiority complex or lack of self-confidence, call it what you will, had

not enacted by miles the role he is entitled to as a front-rank leader of Communism. But you, especially, in view of your responsibility and your location, increased our heavy handicap. We fought a defensive battle, on terrain that was not of our choosing. I believe that experience must have aged you considerably, at least have had a sobering effect. Our grouping was paying the penalty of looseness of organization and haziness of thought and lack of collective leadership. Had we been in the position that Cannon/Swabeck demagogically arrogated to themselves or even had half their cards, the results for Cannon/Swabeck would have been unforgettable. What aided us of course was the essential honesty of our internationalism and the pretentiousness of theirs. In a word, the last conference just saved our grouping from being heavily compromised and the organization from being delivered up to the tender mercies of an Oehler, a Swabeck, a Gordon, et tutti quanti [and all of them]. All this recapitulation is by way of explaining one's cautious approach to another conference.

What is undoubtedly encouraging is the demonstration we have had since the plenum that factional smartness by itself is not decisive. That is where even a master of intrigue with the resources of a state at his disposal will break his neck, if he cannot confront and solve the big issues. And while Cannon is smart he is no Stalin. Even as a factionalist Cannon overreaches himself. I submit that had he accepted our suggestion to let the committee stand as it had been, his position would have been stronger, particularly would his prestige have mounted, if accompanied by a statement to the plenum renouncing all "the spoils of victory," "generously" offering collaboration, you know the rest. But his mistakes flow from: 1. undue personal animosity ("subjectivism" he would say in others) coloring his political measures, that same spitefulness, against which Lenin warned in a revolutionary leader; 2. from the underestimation of his opponents; 3. the narrowness of his horizons, theoretical and strategical.

This letter is overly long. I was going to raise the question of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, but it will keep for another time.⁴⁰⁸

Results of the Postplenum Discussion

by Martin Abern and Max Shachtman⁴⁰⁹

3 January 1933

Submitted to the resident committee on January 5 and appended to the minutes, this document was a reply to the NC majority's statement on the referendum, which had been authored by Cannon and published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 5.⁴¹⁰

On Cannon's motion the committee decided not to immediately distribute Shachtman and Abern's statement as they demanded. Rather, the committee voted that the statement "be received in the record and published in the internal bulletin of preconference discussion." Having decided at its previous meeting to begin preparations for a national conference, the committee intended to publish discussion material in Internal Bulletins instead of the Militant, as had been the practice for the CLA's First and Second National conferences. However, the third conference was delayed, and this statement never appeared in an IB.

The Shachtman faction was making an issue of the fact that Bernard Morgenstern, on the night of his release after 90 days in prison for "sedition," had consented to his parents' request that a rabbi perform his wedding ceremony. The resident committee discussed the matter on December 29, when Morgenstern submitted a statement: "My act was done under certain sentiments and considerations of a personal nature and not out of the least impulse on my part toward reconciliation with bourgeois ideology or any of its religious superstitions." He regretted that his action had harmed the League and offered his resignation as an alternate member of the National Committee. Shachtman moved to suspend Morgenstern from the League for one year. Instead, because of Morgenstern's excellent record, the committee voted for Cannon's motion to condemn Morgenstern and to accept his resignation from the NC. Cannon explained to Dunne:

One might ask why the derelictions of Morgenstern, which are purely individual and isolated, can be grabbed up so eagerly as an issue, and why people who maintained an unruffled indifference to such overshadowing questions as the international resolution can work up such

*a lather about it. The explanation, of course, lies in the inescapable logic of a faction that is not grounded in principle. Having no principled differences, or not daring to bring them forward and defend them, they must resort to all kinds of personal issues.*⁴¹¹

The statement finally issued by the National Committee majority on the results of the postplenum discussion and voting is so out of harmony with the facts, omits so many important points, and so distorts those with which it deals, that we are compelled, apart from other considerations, to set down our own presentation of the situation.

One of the aspects of the discussion which invested it with such an importance was the fact that it was the first one to revolve around a major internal dispute in the American section of the International Left Opposition. Consequently, its results afford the opportunity for drawing some lessons and conclusions for which there was no occasion in the past. An examination of some of the features of the discussion will show that they occupy a unique position in the records of the international Opposition, at the very least in the records of the American Opposition.

1. The plenum met on 10 June 1932 and ended a few days later. The statement on the postplenum discussion was first presented to the National Committee by the Cannon-Swabeck faction controlling it, on 29 December 1932—that is, more than six and a half months later. Our repeated requests for a tabulation of the votes cast were ignored in the committee. It entertained the hope to the last minute that by some chance more votes would be cast, or votes already cast would be changed in order that the proposal to co-opt three members of the Cannon group into the National Committee might finally be endorsed in the referendum. One would look with difficulty if not in vain for a precedent in the Communist movement for so protracted a postplenum or postcongress period. The protests registered by us against this procedure were either passed over in silence or answered with sophistical insistence that “everybody be given a chance to vote”—although every branch had been informed at the outset that the discussion period was set for 30 days.

2. The discussion, as actually conducted on a national scale, was in many respects a mockery of a democratically organized internal discussion. Although the issues involved are of vital significance for the League, no internal bulletin was issued in which the

members of the organization might express their views. On several occasions, our proposal in the committee for the issuance of such a bulletin was flatly rejected.⁴¹² A favorable recommendation on the same point made by the New York branch met with the same fate. The fault was the following: By means of the three bulletins issued, the Cannon-Swabeck group was able to reach the entire membership with its point of view. But a member of the Chicago branch, for example, had no means of communicating his views and opinions on the plenum to the members of the Minneapolis, or Boston, or New York branch, and vice versa. Other sections of the International Left Opposition have internal bulletins *at all times* in which members may contribute divergent views for discussion. Our League has the distinction of being denied an internal bulletin even during an "abnormal" period of sharp inner dispute.

3. This arbitrary refusal to issue the internal bulletin is even more reprehensible in the light of other considerations. The "Carter group" was specifically criticized or condemned in two plenum resolutions, which were sent out to the membership for endorsement. The non-New York membership has never set eyes on Carter or his "group," or even seen a trace of any political statement or document from which his position might be judged. It should have been afforded the opportunity to read the standpoint of Carter, since we assume that they are not "hopeless idiots" who "take somebody's word for it." Yet the membership, by the refusal of the Cannon faction to permit an internal bulletin, was deprived of the opportunity of hearing from Carter, just as Carter was deprived of the opportunity of making known his point of view at least on the resolutions directly affecting him. What Oppositionists can defend such and similar procedure (which has such atrocious precedents in the proletarian movement)? Only those who talk so incessantly about "principle" in order that the practical application of principle may be ignored. What political significance can now be attached to the votes of those comrades outside of New York who voted against the "Carter group" without ever having seen what they stand for or what defense they have against the criticisms and charges leveled at them? The only positive gain from this procedure lies in the hope that the membership will never permit its repetition, save at the risk of sacrificing in deeds what we proclaim in words.

The same procedure applies also in the case of Saul in New York. He presented a resolution to the New York branch which criticized both groups in the National Committee.⁴¹³ In New York he was able to defend his standpoint quite adequately. Outside of New York, nobody knew of Saul's opinions. Nobody could associate himself with them or disassociate himself from them, for the simple reason that the *elementary vehicle* for an internal discussion in the Opposition—a bulletin at the disposal of the membership—was denied the organization, without even a reason for the denial being given us in the National Committee. From those and subsequent facts may be estimated how justified is the criticism recently made in the NY branch by comrade Cannon that, if anything, the procedure in the League heretofore has suffered from being “ultrademocratic.”

4. Less excusable than any of the numerous arbitrary acts of the Cannon faction during the discussion was the complete suppression of the document, “The Situation in the American League—Prospect and Retrospect,” signed by Abern, Glotzer, and Shachtman. This document was presented for the information of the June 1932 plenum in answer to the document by Cannon and Swabeck (*Internal Bulletin* no. 3). Following the agreement reached on the most important question before the plenum, we agreed to withdraw our document from the records in the interests of unity, i.e., it would be withdrawn from the records in the interests of unity *provided that* the Cannon-Swabeck document, to which ours was an answer, would be kept in the archives and not be sent out. If it were to be sent out, our reply could not be withdrawn. After the plenum, Cannon presented a statement on its results which, he acknowledged at that time, could not be acceptable to the minority. At that committee meeting, provision was made for sending out in the *Internal Bulletin* a counterstatement on the plenum results. When we presented it, Cannon *withdrew* his first statement, wrote the one which finally appeared as the NC statement (*Bulletin* no. 1) and then proceeded to violate the plenum agreement by sending out in the discussion precisely those documents which were not to be sent out: i.e., the Shachtman statement on the Engels controversy and the Cannon-Swabeck statement attacking Shachtman. Confronted with an accomplished fact, we had no other course than to demand that our document also be sent out in the discussion.

To this the Cannon faction agreed *and the National Committee voted to send it out*. But like so many declarations and records on paper, the decision was never, to this day, carried into effect. With the decision came the motion that it be sent out *only after* a reply to go along with it had been drawn up by the National Committee, that is, by comrade Cannon. The latter has had six months' time in which to draw up the reply. A few months ago in order to delay ending the protracted discussion in the New York branch, comrade Cannon announced that he had only a few pages to complete in his reply, which would be ready a few days later. Months have elapsed and no reply has been forthcoming. Worse yet, however, is the fact that *our document was never sent out to the membership in the discussion*. This did not prevent the just-then organized Newark branch from adopting, under the tutelage of comrade Basky, a categorical and violent condemnation of the minority right at the beginning of the postplenum discussion.

In a word, the three *Internal Bulletins* contained all the documents ever issued by the Cannon group but not the principal document of the minority. In New York, the minority of the NC could defend its standpoint orally on the branch floor. On a national scale, its voice was shut off by the above-outlined "ultrademocratic" procedure.

To this should be added the following facts: 1. Our amendments to the Toronto resolution of the National Committee were never sent out, despite our insistence; 2. Important corrections to the plenum minutes which we made and which related to the postplenum discussion were also prohibited from a place in the *Bulletin*;⁴¹⁴ 3. It was decided in advance by the National Committee (Swabeck motion, 25 November 1932) that the minority can file its own statement on the postplenum discussion for the archives, but cannot have it sent to the membership together with the National Committee majority statement. From all this it will be seen that to sign solemn statements in America against Landau and Landauism in Germany is a comparatively simple thing to do. But that is no guarantee at all that the signers are above employing the very methods pursued by Landau in dealing with minority opponents.

In the face of these indefensible, anti-Opposition, and anti-democratic *practices*, the minority must continue to refuse to take seriously all the *paper* charges about "petty-bourgeois politics,"

“political inconsistency,” “factional excesses,” “heterogeneity,” “unprincipled blocs,” “only principled path,” etc. The documents and speeches of the majority faction in the NC are decorated with them. As shown by the first important dispute on a national scale in which the Cannon faction has engaged with an opponent, these practices and methods, plus others which are beneath mention, characterize the former group. Until they are changed, the glib repetition of the word “principle” will retain its hollow sound to the increasing injury of the League.

5. The votes cast in the discussion may be analyzed as follows: The League voted virtually unanimously on the two resolutions dealing with the situation in the European Left Opposition. Nobody in the League could be found to defend the course of those groups or tendencies condemned by the plenum resolutions, thus putting to rest the light-minded charges made at the beginning about the existence in the American League of a “Landau” or “Naville” tendency. The attempt to make capital out of the fact that all nine abstentions on the international resolution are recorded in New York is shallow and crude. The list of the nine thus recorded because of lack of information on the subject or other reasons will be seen to include in it just as many supporters of the Cannon group as there are opponents among them. In this case, as in so many others, can be found that factional myopia with which such important problems are approached by the National Committee majority. The charge was made against Shachtman by Cannon that the former prevented the National Committee from acting speedily on the disputed international questions, from recording the League promptly in order that alien tendencies in the European Opposition might not speculate upon possible support in the American League. This did not prevent the National Committee from prolonging to an unprecedented length the period of time originally set in order to enable the whole League to act swiftly and present its opinion to the European leagues in time to exert a positive influence. The discussion on the international question also showed the quintessential importance of providing the League membership with timely information on the developments in the I.O., primarily by the prompt issuance of the *international* bulletins, which are now more than a year delayed in the English edition.

6. The significance and value of the votes cast on the “Carter

group" have already been referred to. Neither of the two resolutions obtained a majority of the votes cast. Out of the ten branches that voted in the postplenum discussion, only five voted on the question (New York, Boston, Youngstown, Philadelphia, Newark), whereas in none of the other five was a distinct vote cast specifically on either of the two documents before them (Minneapolis, Kansas City, Chicago, St. Louis, Toronto). This may be ascribed essentially to two causes: a. Most of the League members felt, and justly so, that there was no good ground for seeking to magnify the so-called "Carter group" of three young comrades into an issue of national political significance and to convert it into a factional football; b. The failure of the non-New York comrades to learn what the position of Carter actually was, as we indicated above, made them hesitate to vote a condemnation out of hand. The efforts made since the plenum to sharpen the situation with respect to these comrades, to alienate them, in a word, to act toward them in a manner directly opposite to that proposed by us in our plenum statement (a passage which is also incorporated on paper in the resolution of the NC majority) has not served to improve the situation. A glaring example of the attitude that should *not* be adopted is the provocative passage in the NC statement on the postplenum results which declares that Carter "has openly attacked the international resolution at branch meetings." Not only is this statement quite untrue, but it is calculated to exaggerate and artificially sharpen the attitude toward Carter in the League. Our intention to counteract the influence of Carter where it is harmful rests as before on the position we have taken in the past, without in any way making it difficult or impossible for him to continue with the work in which he has been actively and loyally engaged among the youth. We shall refuse also, as in the past, to make any factional combinations with the NC majority which seems, as implied in its first resolution on the question, to attain the earliest possible expulsion of these comrades from the League. There remains only to establish the actual vote on the two resolutions in question. The majority received the following votes cast specifically for its resolution: New York, 19; Newark, 4; Philadelphia, 7; or a total of 30. The minority received the following votes cast specifically for its resolution: New York, 11; Boston, 7; Youngstown, 1; or a total of 19. These figures compare with the more than 130 votes cast for the international resolution.

7. The Toronto resolution received a majority of the votes cast on it. Many branches did not record themselves specifically on the resolution, most likely on the grounds of insufficient information on the question. At the same time, it must be stated that the Toronto situation has not yet been brought to a definitive conclusion. Our amendments were aimed at facilitating this conclusion by more clearly disassociating the NC from the thoroughly sterile elements around Krehm-Roth and strengthening the group around Spector and MacDonald. The leaders of the former group actually suffer from all the defects, multiplied a number of times, which the Cannon group ascribes to Carter. Nevertheless the unnecessary prolongation of the Toronto situation has been nurtured by the dilatory tactics of the NC against which we many times have taken a clear stand. The Krehm-Roth group since the plenum has led an entirely unproductive life and conducted itself in a manner that not only hampered the sturdy progress the branch has been making but has served to discredit the Left Opposition in Toronto. The branch around Spector-MacDonald, on the other hand, has not only grown considerably in membership, but has unfolded a healthy activity, gained in prestige and influence, and issued its own monthly organ, the *Vanguard*. The Krehm-Roth group continues to eke out an existence today largely due to the fact that the NC majority has consistently failed to bring matters to a solution, by insisting on an empty formula which the situation has long since passed beyond. Less than ever is there any reason now for continuing a quite artificial preservation of the "two branch" condition in Toronto, where one is flourishing, while the other vegetates and stands in the way.

8. In the course of the discussion, the question of the co-optations proposed to the National Committee soon became one of the principal axes. Our unheeded warning at the plenum against this purely factional proposal to establish a permanent, arbitrary, "guaranteed" majority in the NC for the Cannon group, without any foundation in principled differences, was verified by the results of the referendum on the decision. Every effort was made to obtain a majority for the co-optations, but it was properly rejected by the League. In this connection, the figures published in the NC statement are not quite accurate.⁴¹⁵ The vote on the co-optations was as follows:

Branch	For	Against	Abstaining
New York	22	35	5
Chicago	4	9	2
Boston	0	7	0
Philadelphia	7	0	0
Newark	4	0	0
Toronto	0	5	0
Youngstown	0	1	2
St. Louis	4	0	0
Kansas City	1	0	0
Minneapolis	12	8	3
Totals:	54	65	12

The discrepancy in the two sets of figures is explained as follows: The Philadelphia branch first cast seven votes; later on it sent in two more votes; but as is known, the branch has only seven members or did have seven at the time of the discussion. Newark first cast four votes; later on after the Newark "discussion" was concluded, another vote was sent in, the vote of a new member. Kansas City cast three votes, but as is shown by the reports made from the tours of comrades Swabeck, Clarke, Glotzer, Lewit, and Bleeker, there is and for the last two years there has been only one member in Kansas City.

(We counted the Minneapolis vote on the co-optation, for that is what was actually at issue when the vote was taken. It should be noted that despite the presence in the branch of two NC members and one alternate, no vote was taken on a single resolution or motion of the plenum. It was cast as follows: "for the majority" and "for the minority.")

Although the results of the referendum were known and were quite clear months ago, the "co-opted" members continued to sit in the National Committee and exercise the right of participation and decisive vote which they did not justly have. Following the decisive defeat of the co-optations, the NC majority, in direct violation of the spirit expressed in the referendum, voted to constitute a factionally aligned "political committee" in place of the resident committee which has been in existence since the foundation of the League.

The explanation for the defeat of the co-optations given by the NC majority is entirely out of conformity with the facts. It declares that the three comrades of the "Carter group" cast the "deciding votes against the co-optations." The figures above promptly dispose of this contention. Further on, it says, "Other comrades who are in conflict with the NC on important political questions (Boston branch) also voted against the co-optations." And again the Boston comrades are referred to as being "in conflict with the NC as a whole on questions which have a principled character."

In these two observations are condensed the essentially factional outlook of the Cannon group. *Its subjectivity toward opponents in the League* drives it to the artificial magnifying of small or casual differences and even to the creation of them for the purpose of discrediting those who refrain from becoming part of the "revolutionary kernel" in which, as is known, there are no conflicts of a "principled character." On what "important political questions" "which have a principled character" is the Boston branch in conflict with the NC? On not a single one! No record or document or trace of one exists to indicate it, nor can one be produced.

If the reference is to *one question*, the NC policy in the needle trades (and that is the only possible reference), the statement is equally untrue. The branch has endorsed the NC policy of having the left wing demand unity on the basis of joining en masse and freedom of fraction and opinion. Not even the branch minority of two or three declares itself in disagreement with this policy. As we understand it, they do, however, declare that the Opposition should not take the initiative in openly proposing this policy, but leave it instead to the logic of events to force the Party to adopt it. In this disagreement, the two or three comrades are, of course, wrong, and their wrong stand is not mitigated by the fact that as disciplined comrades they carry out the decisions of the NC. Our policy toward these three devoted comrades, who have such a good record in the left-wing movement, should be to convince them of their false position by comradely discussion. It is in this manner that we gained the support of these comrades in the past when their views on needle trades policy did not harmonize with those of the NC. But not an inch of progress will be made by launching a factional, exaggerated offensive against them simply because they are not supporters of the Cannon group.

The idea that our policy is correct, but that we should not take the initiative in it, leaving that instead to the Party, is undoubtedly wrong on the part of these rank-and-file militants in Boston. But wherein does it differ from the position taken by comrade Swabeck on the Gillespie Progressive Miners' Convention a few months ago?¹¹⁶ We proposed in the NC that our fraction at Gillespie should take up the Communist banner, in the absence of the Stalinists; that it should defend the Communist Party presidential candidates and seek to win the assembled workers to revolutionary political action. In this we were supported by comrade Cannon. Swabeck, supported by Basky, proposed that we should not raise the question of endorsing the revolutionary ticket at all—unless the Socialists first raise the question of endorsing the Socialist ticket! This did not, as is the case in Boston, put us at the tail of the Communist Party, but it did propose to have us drag behind the tail of the Socialists. Its political significance could only be, in effect, this: We are for the Communist ticket, but if the Socialists are good enough not to bring up the question of politics and elections, we will not bring it up either; if they force us to, then we will. This question was of course settled on the spot in the NC, but nobody, not even comrade Cannon, proposed to conduct a campaign against comrade Swabeck (who continued to insist that his position was correct) for having “conflicts of a principled character” with the NC.

The attempts to explain away the defeat of the co-optations in the manner of the NC majority is in harmony with the factional obliqueness which prevents it from seeing a disputed question in anything but a distorted form. The minority lays no claim to any factional hidebound “homogeneity,” or the title of “Marxian trunk,” or “revolutionary kernel,” or “Bolshevik group” of the League—claims which have driven the Cannon group blindly along that course which eliminates from it increasing numbers of League members. We do, however, assert our ability to collaborate in the work of the League in a comradely manner even with those members with whom we are in disagreement on this or that question, so long as these differences do not extend to the fundamental doctrines of the Opposition. The lack of this ability in the Cannon group, in the mind of which a verbal “intransigence” and “principledness” covers up factional violations of many of the practices and methods which are the distinct attributes of the Left

Opposition in the Communist movement, has forced this group into most of its untenable positions and arguments.

Thus a mountain is made of the election of Petras to the New York branch executive as a "reward" for the violation of discipline in going to the Weisbord meeting despite the NC prohibition—as if this act—indeffensible though it is—constituted the sole or main test in the case.⁴¹⁷ At the same time, it is discreetly forgotten that the other two members violating the NC prohibition (Berman and Shulman) are supporters of the Cannon faction. And on top of that, no mention is made at all of the case of Morgenstern, leader of the Cannon faction in Philadelphia. His violation of elementary Communist ideas (religious marriage) for doing that for which he had himself expelled two members of the Young Communist League several years ago—as they deserved—was covered up by the NC majority. Our restrained motion for suspension for one year was met with the theatrical cries, "You shall not lynch comrade Morgenstern!" The countermotion of Cannon must be read to the very end before one discovers whether Morgenstern is being praised or criticized for his conduct.

The same attitude is displayed in the complaint over the elections to the NY branch executive (which the NC tried arbitrarily to overthrow), but no mention is made of the fact that in Minneapolis, virtually all the comrades supporting the minority were eliminated from the executive at the last election.

The failure to gain the factional victory on the co-optations is not to be attributed to the "heterogeneous composition of the NY branch" or the "Carter group" or the "Boston branch." To present this utterly false picture as the one side and a "homogeneous principled group" on the other side will not stand the test of the slightest examination. The fact remains that the bulk of the support given the Cannon group in the postplenum discussion came: 1. from the two most stagnant and least active branches, Newark and Philadelphia, led by Morgenstern; 2. from the leaders of the Minneapolis branch, comrades Dunne and Skoglund, who have pursued such an opportunistic policy on one question after another as to bring them into real, and not imaginary, conflict with the NC time after time.

This is not the place to draw all the lessons and conclusions from the recent developments in the internal situation of the League. Nor can this serve as the occasion for presenting a series

of proposals on the steps to be taken to solve the problem, as well as the many other problems of our work in general, which have been neglected and which press for solution. But it can be said now that it is fundamentally wrong to approach the problem, as does the NC majority, from the standpoint that the "NY branch remains as the focal point of the internal crisis." The fact is that the bulk of the members with party training and tradition in New York do not support the course of the Cannon group. The fact is that the bulk of the proletarian elements in the branch do not support the course of the Cannon group. The fact is that the bulk of the young comrades, in whose development the League places its whole future, do not support the course of the Cannon group. The fact is, above all, that we reject entirely the attempt to establish the divisions in the NY branch on this arbitrary and essentially reactionary basis. It impedes the fusing together of all the diversified elements into a harmonious interlocking whole by fostering artificial barriers. It also plays to the prejudices of the backward comrades who begin to believe that our internal dispute is part of the general class struggle, in which one faction represents the proletariat and the other the petty bourgeoisie (or as one comrade expressed it, the Thermidorian elements).

To accept the formula of the Cannon group means to shift away from the central axis of the problem. It is not the problem of the New York branch, but the problem of rectifying the relations between the leadership and the membership; of closing the gap which has been created between them; of restoring the confidence of the one in the other (which cannot be established merely by demanding that the authority and prestige of the NC be acknowledged); of a patient, comradely approach to the membership and not a factionally distorted indifference or contempt for their views, particularly when they are not in agreement with those of the leadership; of eliminating those harmful and dangerous practices and methods to which we refer above—a problem of paramount importance; of not immediately meeting criticisms made by calling them "slanders" and "venomous personal attacks"; and, not least of all, of orienting the League in actuality toward the systematic participation in the general class struggle, with the National Committee helping to set the example, etc., etc.

Unless the problem is approached from these angles, it will

not be solved. It most assuredly will not be solved by the method proposed in the statement of the NC majority which pledges itself to a continuation of the past policy which has already so greatly sharpened and deepened the internal crisis in the League. The results of the postplenum discussion mean that it is high time that a halt be called and a change in the course inaugurated. In the coming preconference period, which we hope will not be unnecessarily delayed, we shall endeavor to pose more concretely and extensively the steps that must be taken by the National Committee and the League as a whole for a solution of our problems, steps which flow inexorably out of an objective analysis of our present position.



Cannon's Regime Is on a Par With Landau's

Letter by Max Shachtman to Maurice Spector⁴¹⁸

3 January 1933

This letter was written shortly after Morris Lewit and Sylvia Bleeker returned from a national tour to build Unser Kampf clubs. The tour was a means for organizing the anti-Cannon forces nationally.

Your letter was a relief in many respects, for it clarified a number of points which were not previously clear to me. If I take them up below in enumerated form it is only in order that I may cover everything I want to call to your attention and that the letter shall not be overlong and verschwommen [vague].

1. The decision of the branch on the Swabeck Luxusreise [luxury trip] did not come too soon, but it is highly satisfactory. Be assured that I understand the position you are in with regard to the score of new comrades who can but too easily be disheartened by being plunged into what is at first blush a rather obscure internal dispute. New York, Boston, Chicago, Youngstown, and Toronto—the distinct majority of the membership—have now registered their protests against this plan; but it appears that Cannon and Swabeck intend to go through with it at all costs—and one of the costs may quite likely be the weekly *Militant*. The latter is, as you will have

gathered, hanging by a thread now and the somewhat dubious office management which has brought about the crisis is being veiled behind the age-old charge of factional sabotage on our parts. The sabotage presumably consists in my devoting seven months now to full-time work without one single penny of wages; Lewit's and Bleeker's full-time work on *Unser Kampf* for a year now without having drawn a sou; and the fact that our friends in the New York branch are not only the heaviest but virtually the sole important financial contributors in the organization. If my skin were not so impervious to the venom of Cannon, I would feel more outraged at the insolence of the man who makes the charges against us, but who never distinguished himself by his sacrifices for the movement, as we recall....

Your inability to arrange for my visit to Toronto is distressing, but I don't suppose anything can be done about it under the circumstances. Here, too, I can understand the prevailing sentiment and make allowance for it. Still, I regret tremendously that I am to be deprived of the opportunity of discussing with you and the other comrades the many questions of paramount importance to the League.

2. The Krehm question has been on the agenda for some time now in the committee and all our efforts to bring it to a conclusion have met with stubborn resistance on the part of the majority. When I wrote you some time ago that I thought you might have brought an end to the situation sooner and more favorably if you had been a little more astute—I expressed, of course, a judgment from a distance, with all the defects that such judgments usually contain. This assertion did not signify on my part any revision of my previous appraisal of this “group.” Certainly it did not mean that I have at any time relented in the National Committee in my endeavors to have the regular branch recognized and the rotten faction game of Cannon with Krehm and co. desisted from; up to now, as you know, our efforts have been fruitless. Cannon has affirmed a burning desire not to “cut off comrades without making efforts to save them”—and demagoguery bolstered by a safe voting majority in the committee is virtually invincible! I look forward to your resolution and if it is along the lines I anticipate, we will press again for a conclusion on Toronto.

3. The Morgenstern case came up at the last committee meeting,

where I finally made the motion for his suspension from the League for a year, emphasizing that were there a normal situation I would have moved for his expulsion, even as he had himself expelled two comrades from the Philadelphia Young Communist League years ago for no greater a crime against Communism—marriage by religious ceremony. Cannon presented a lengthy resolution. It must be read to the very bottom before you realize that M. is not being praised for his act, but...condemned. No action is taken against him beyond the harmless “censure.” His “voluntary” resignation from the committee (continued membership would have been too much, don’t you think?!) was accepted. The scandal is made worse by the fact that throughout the trial it seemed that not Morgenstern, but Shachtman, had to be investigated and punished! At the end, Cannon launched into a declamation for the benefit of the gallery assembled outside the door. When he reached the exclamation: “You shall not lynch our comrade Morgenstern!” (yes, literally!), I said: “Save your campaign speeches for the proper occasion, Cannon. You’re in the National Committee now!” I could almost hear the applause from outside the door. This clear-cut case of Tammany protection for “one of the boys,” accompanied by a stink-bomb offensive against those who demanded simple Communist procedure in his case, will not serve to increase Cannon’s prestige or that of his “revolutionary kernel,” Morgenstern included.

4. Our most important problem now is the national conference. Your caution is not *entirely* warranted and, candidly, unless it is overcome we shall not be able to present the firm front which the situation demands. You will not, I hope, complain about the fait accompli when I tell you that we presented a demand at the last meeting for a conference on May 1. It was voted down in favor of Cannon’s motion “endorsing the idea” of a conference on St. Nimmerlein’s Tag [a day that will never come], which means absolutely nothing. The postplenum discussion results were a grievous disappointment to Cannon and he realizes his weak position. The muttered threats of a split, in the event that the “Communist group” (I must enlighten you: Cannon means himself) is in the minority, continue to be peddled in the corridors. We took action on the conference only after thoroughly sober reflection, be sure. Morris and Sylvia brought back a careful report from the various branches, and the demand is universal—without a single exception.

You will err to think that Cannon made any progress in the land with his campaign about "Landauism," etc. To the contrary, it proved a boomerang, and the decisive results on the co-optations (you are correct about his having blundered seriously on that score) will indicate that I am right. Take St. Louis, for instance. They voted against the co-optations. Then Goldberg, under a misapprehension about a whispered report about what Chicago was going to do, prevailed upon the local comrades to vote *for* the co-optations. He explained craftily to Morris that it was done in order to give Cannon a false impression about his strength; this would impel him to call a conference in the expectation of "winning"; St. Louis would appear on the scene with a delegate vowed to trounce the Cannon faction! If you stop laughing long enough at this naive Machiavellianism, you will see that the aims, at any rate, of the St. Louis comrades are laudable. Chicago, now, on its own initiative, has unanimously adopted a resolution (which we proposed to the committee to endorse, but which it did not) calling for a conference on May 1, and John and Al are staunchly for it. So is Cowl; so are our two comrades who built the Davenport branch; so is Boston; so is Angelo, who supports us; so are the great bulk of the New York comrades.

Will the conference be another June plenum? I more than doubt it. If I had any idea that it would repeat the wretched events of the plenum, I would continue to oppose the idea. I have held off with my agreement to a conference for two reasons, neither of which holds water any longer: 1. The plenum atmosphere created by Cannon, which has now completely worn off; not even Cannon seeks any longer to do much exploiting of my 1931 visit to Europe and the complications surrounding it. And how could he and what results would he obtain? *It is a bit tedious to have dinned into your ears the worn echoes of a dispute that originated a year or a year and a half ago, and the comrades don't pay much attention to it. It will appear at a conference only as a sadly decomposed wraith.* 2. My uncertainty about a staff with which to replace the present "leading kernel"—a most important question, for what political indictment of the present leadership can be presented without following it with inevitable organizational proposals and alternatives? Here, too, the situation has improved considerably. I believe that Marty is now prepared to take the place in the work which properly belongs to him; all the comrades have

commented on the fact that his activities have increased considerably, and during the branch elections there was a spontaneous demand from the New York membership that he take the post of organizer instead of Oehler, who has proved to be not only factional but incompetent. We resisted the demand not so much on Marty's account but because of our desire to cooperate as much as possible and not to leave ourselves open to the demagogic charge of "removals." As for a new National Committee, there is timber aplenty in our group and of an infinitely superior quality to the saplings and petrified redwood proposed in the late referendum. There are not only Marty, Al, Edwards, you, and I, but also Lewit and Jack Weber, a comrade I am desirous of proposing for the next committee. He has not been in the League for the period required by the Constitution; that is true; but his case in no way resembles Gordon's. Weber is not only a highly intelligent, well-informed, well-poised scholar, but a man of considerable experience in the movement. Engineer by profession, he has been in the movement for two decades at least, to my knowledge. He taught in the Rand School in his old SP days; entered the Communist movement at the very outset; joined the Opposition some while ago. Interestingly enough, Cannon sent him into our group! That is, after his first visits with Cannon at the time he joined the League, he sized up the man with uncanny accuracy. He stands high in the eyes of the New York comrades and his articles (even if they are drawn out) on Japan have aroused considerable interest concerning himself.¹¹⁹ If I draw so long a portrait, it is only to acquaint you more intimately with a well-balanced and reliable comrade whom you will find it a pleasure to meet and for whom you will feel no need to apologize if he joins you on a National Committee.

So you see, the questions you raise so cogently have been considered by us here too. The conference, if it does not dispute over "Landauism," will not dispute either about what happened four years ago. There is enough and more in the last year to speak about. If I say that Toronto has given a picture of what the League as a whole must begin to do, not any longer on paper but in actuality, I am only stating a conviction. The self-satisfied office-chair squatting which forms the beginning and end of Swabeck's horizon—and Cannon's, for that matter—is compelling the League to stagnate in its own tiny pool. We propose to draw up a resolution,

separate from the general thesis on which formal agreement is so easy to reach, dealing with the "internal situation and the next tasks of the League," or words to that effect. It will be an arraignment of the whole inner course and the methods of leadership of the Cannon group. This is not a "political question" in the grammar-school definition of the term adhered to by Oehler; but it is nevertheless of the highest significance for the League at the present time. Cannon has established a regime in the League—I am not throwing the word around loosely—which is *mutatis mutandis* on a par with Landau's. Perorations on principle for the purpose of executing unprincipled games; the arbitrary suppression of minority views (failure to issue an internal bulletin during the discussion; suppression of our lengthy preplenum statement; refusal to send out our concluding word on the postplenum discussion; bureaucratic prohibition against attending "Weisbord's meeting"; failure to provide Saul and Carter with an opportunity to defend their views in the discussion on a national scale; etc., etc.); the artificial exacerbation of disputes and the manufacture of "differences" where they do not exist ("our fundamental differences on policy with the Boston branch"—a new song from the Cannon repertory); the paralyzing of the New York branch with factional intrigue and disruption, simply because it burns no incense at Cannon's shrine; and the impeding of the work in Toronto for the same good reason—all this and much more from the voluminous catalog created by Cannon in the last year alone will constitute an arraignment against which he will have to draw to the very bottom of the wells of cunning for a reply. At the same time, we intend to present in the same preconference statement a positive criticism of the stagnation and permanent financial crisis (two sides of one coin) in the League and our proposals that the League strike out boldly on a course which will enable it to quit its present circle existence and slough off the elements who thrive on such an existence (Cannon, by the way, exemplified them), gaining by that new recruits who will more than make up for the dubious losses.

The internal situation has reached the stage where to desist from a conference will only render the difficulties more acute. It is either/or! We must accept the inevitability of a Cannon incubus in the leadership, plus a sniping criticism here and there, now and then; or else we must challenge it openly. I am determined

on the latter. Remember this: If we emerged from the plenum to our present position despite the handicaps which you refer to with such painful accuracy, it is a sign not of our weakness but of our strength.

Now that Cannon, despite his previous boasts that he would agree to a conference the minute the minority demanded it, has voted down our proposal, we intend to exercise our constitutional right to demand it from the membership directly. The statutes provide that it can be convoked by the executive committees or membership of branches representing the majority of the League. This can and should be done—but done promptly, else our objective will not be attained. Chicago is already recorded unanimously. Boston will vote this week on it. New York will undoubtedly carry our motion tomorrow night. So will St. Louis, Cleveland, Youngstown, and Davenport. If Toronto throws its vote into the balance, the knife is at their throat. To act, you require no formal notification from the center. The initiative can come from you, on the basis of the need to settle the internal situation and the proposal of Chicago. I urge you solemnly to bring the question up (regardless of what may stand in the way at the moment) at the next branch meeting and adopt a motion calling for the conference on May 1. The date is most necessary, in order that the votes may count on a national scale for a common date. If you agree, do not bother to write immediately; your action will be better. If you are in doubt, write me *air mail*, because speed and concert of action now count for worlds. More later.

Cannon's Suave Calumny

Letter by Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer⁴²⁰

8 January 1933

The date of January 8 may be an error, since this letter refers to disputes recorded in the resident committee minutes dated January 9, where Abern and Shachtman submitted a statement against Cannon becoming CLA national secretary. Also at that meeting, Cannon objected to the Militant's report of the Spartacus Youth Club intervention led by Glotzer in Chicago at the recent Student Congress Against War.⁴²¹ The committee postponed consideration of Cannon's motion labeling the article "an inadequate and incorrect treatment of this affair," pending receipt of a more detailed report by Glotzer.

I am enclosing to you a statement on the results of the postplenum discussion which Marty and I submitted to the National Committee. It speaks for itself and less could not have been said. As we expected, the committee decided that it was not to be sent out to the membership. The—by your leave!—grounds for the refusal were the highly formal ones that the "discussion is at an end" and that the NC must have the last word on it. At the same time, Cannon promised to safeguard the rights of the minority by assuring us that when the preconference discussion opens, the present statement would appear in an internal bulletin. With this polestar before us, we are supposed to console ourselves in the meantime with the thought that the document will be safely stowed away in the archives. However, I am afraid that ways will be found by the membership of learning the contents of it even in the face of the suppression. I would not use the latter term if I did not remember that even under different circumstances and when the same formality could not be summoned to his aid, Cannon systematically sabotaged the sending out of our plenum document to the membership in the recent discussion, on the grounds that he was "preparing an exhaustive reply"—which never appeared for the simple reason that it was not and could not be written. If there were ever any doubt about it, it is now as plain as

a pikestaff that our recent discussion was a stigma with which the League was branded by the Cannon faction which, in the course of it, showed that it had not risen very much higher in its methods than the Stalinists, not, of course, of the 1932 vintage, but the Stalinists of 1925-1926, let us say. To learn by rote all the political and theoretical formulae of the Bolshevick-Leninists is evidently a far cry from having become a Bolshevick and from practicing those loyal methods with which that distinguished name were once associated.

The other enclosure is a motion we made today in connection with a new development in the committee. For some days the office has been buzzing lightly with the report that Cannon was to be dismissed from his job. On Thursday last, Swabeck presented us, out of the clear blue, with the motion that Cannon act as secretary during (and after) his trip to Europe with a wage minimum of \$25. Had the proposal been made honestly and forthrightly, it would not have induced in us the nausea it did. With a burst of righteous virtue, Cannon announced that under the pressure of "the masses" and of the situation, he had decided to sacrifice his job and work for the League. There is the whole Elmer Gantry for you! We requested and were finally given time for consideration and the matter was laid over to this afternoon's special meeting. Here we introduced the enclosed motion which opened up all the sluices of Cannon's infinite reservoirs of suave calumny. We were not only this, that, and the other thing, but also positively the worst faction he had ever seen in his day and age; we were trying to starve him out before he began; we were trying to prevent him from working professionally for the organization, but we should not succeed. And more of the same. However, the memory of that nightmarish period during which he occupied the post in question and kept his feet cocked on the desk while the organization collapsed, plus the more recent memories of his genteel abstention from any work that would soil his fingertips or entail the expenditure of more energy than is required to indict a document against the minority—these are too redolent of what Cannon in office means to the organization for us to have been blackjacked into acquiescence by his blustering. We made that plain in the committee, too. Swabeck, who covered more than one page of type with bitter complaints about Cannon's negligence, indifference, and indolence, turned his bitterness against Marty now,

in an attempt to make us forget what he once wrote to both Jim and us against the former. Oehler, who came to New York with the oath still fresh on his lips that he would find out why Cannon is doing nothing for the League, not writing for the paper, etc., and who for six months has sat like a stone image while Cannon pursued his sweet old way, made a campaign speech that would put Bourke Cochran to shame. You will see that we are forthright and blunt in our motion, as we are in the "discussion" statement; and high time it is. For years we have all suffered to varying degrees from a bad survival of the Party faction days. Years ago, regardless of how acute the factional situation in the Party, the various leaders would make clever political points and achieve smart parliamentary victories over each other in public, always preserving a sham dignity and politeness to each other, which served to facilitate the 180-degree turns about-face with which the factions regularly startled the Party: "intransigent" hostility one day; amicable blocs or unity the next day. In *private*, the most deadly criticisms, the most annihilating analyses of the other camp were expressed—and went no further. This dualistic system was not merely calculated to preserve the traditions and prestige of the institution of leadership among the "masses." It was a part-conscious, part-unconscious reciprocity agreement among the faction chieftains. The leaders' personal characteristics (I don't mean his family life, of course, but those of his characteristics which were reflected in his political life and which were in some cases so rotten as to disqualify the man automatically from leadership in a healthy organization) were a *party taboo*. Lovestone attacked Foster politely for his "line," which did not prevent him from making one unprincipled bloc after another with him; but privately, Lovestone told the story of Foster's war record. And vice versa, for Foster secretly told the story of Lovestone's court testimony.¹²² I think we were right in the *Militant* in telling both stories publicly, because both these individuals were patently unfitted to lead the proletarian party, regardless of what "line" they so lightly signed their names to. In a sense, the same applies to our situation. To preserve Cannon's prestige for the movement, to enable him to function unmolested, we covered up the record of his boundless laziness, his criminal negligence of the tasks assigned to him, those petty factional digs and intrigues which he clothes so masterfully and brilliantly with the oral garments of "principle." Unfortunately,

he overreached himself, as Maurice would say. He has forgotten that this is the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition and not the good old days in the Party. That is why we are now compelled from time to time to throw a beam of light upon dark spots and sewers. If they are filthy and stink, they are at least not of our creation. They can be cleaned up not by covering them up with a layer of leaves, as they used to do in medieval England, until the floor was covered with the stratified droppings of generations, but by pointing the light at them and telling the organization to clean them up. That is why we are compelled again to label Cannon and his faction leaders as what they are. And as we have learned, there is no possible overestimation of the abuse, the polished slanders to which we will be submitted because of it. But I for one am through with even the suspicion of hypocrisy in party relations for the sake of and in this meaning of the Oppositionist commandment: To speak out what is....

In the long run and even right at this moment, it will bring nothing but good to us and the movement. It does not matter overmuch what the Cannons will say in the coming weeks or months, although they will say a great deal. The amount of things they say will be in inverse proportion to the truth contained in them. I venture to predict that when Cannon is ready to pour out his arguments, you will hear him say with that serious eloquence of his: "I saved the League from disaster; Abern brought it to the brink of collapse. I worked to bring the League to its present level; Abern and Shachtman sabotaged. I made sacrifice after sacrifice; Abern and Shachtman brought us to the verge of financial ruin." Mark my words!

A final point. At today's meeting, an attack upon you and our fraction at the Chicago antiwar conference was presaged by some "preliminary motions" by Cannon. He assailed your first article as inadequate and incorrect; opposed voting for the conference resolution which was adopted in Chicago; opposed Geltman accepting on the Action Committee.⁴²³ What he has in mind will be clearer at the coming meeting of the committee, to which Geltman is to report, as well as at the joint meeting of the NC and the National Youth Committee proposed by Cannon. You know that Clarke introduced into the latter body a proposal rejecting *any* united front of Communists and non-Communists in the struggle against war, rejected it in principle. It smacks of puerile

leftism to me, and I will go into the matter more extensively in the committee. In the meantime, I am awaiting your report on the conference, as well as the critical second article you promised.

Swabeck leaves tomorrow, on the basis of a century loan and \$80 raised by Minneapolis, which came through in the "emergency," although its regular contributions have been down to the thin line of late. Imagine if the same held true for New York: With what impassioned gestures would the charge of "financial sabotage by the minority" be flung into the stormy discussions of the branch!

Thank you for the *Daily Workers*. It is a good...beginning! Let me hear from you, John, and Joe at the earliest opportunity. And it should not be imagined by you that the enclosed material is intended solely for your archives or for the perusal of a select aristocracy. Best wishes to you and yours.



Against Cannon as National Secretary

by Martin Abern and Max Shachtman⁴²⁴

9 January 1933

This statement was submitted to the January 9 meeting of the resident committee and circulated as part of the minutes. The committee deferred action on the question until the following day.

At the last meeting of the committee, comrade Swabeck made the following proposal: That in his absence, comrade Cannon shall occupy the seat of national secretary; that this selection is visualized as more than a merely temporary measure; that the occupancy of the post be based upon guaranteeing a minimum weekly wage of \$25 to comrade Cannon and \$15 a week to comrade Shachtman.

We cannot agree to this proposal for the following reasons:

1. It would add to the disbursement of the League a sum of \$170 a month. We are entirely in accord with the idea of paying the functionaries of the League on a regular basis, and the League must strive toward reaching this position as quickly as possible.

But the *realities* of the situation must take precedence over the *desires* we may have. The fact is that at the present time and for months past, the income of the League has barely made it possible for us to publish the *Militant* as a weekly and that only on the condition that for the past seven months neither of the two functionaries of the League has drawn any wages. The addition of \$170 per month to our expenditures can only be accomplished by immediately endangering the issuance of the weekly *Militant*, if not also of other enterprises. The *practical reality* indicates that it will not be for several months yet that we shall even be able to approach the sum set for wages without risking the *Militant's* life.

2. The past conduct of comrade Cannon in the League is a fact that we cannot ignore. During his occupancy of the post of secretary, comrade Cannon neglected his work in so disastrous a manner as to endanger the cohesive existence of the organization and to provoke the protest of every unit of the League. Even in the last seven months alone—to say nothing of the preceding period—comrade Cannon has not undertaken any important work for the League. His activity has been confined largely to the writing of some statements for the committee. These facts we are compelled to take into consideration when deciding upon the election of the administrator of the national work of the League—for which post is proposed a comrade whose conduct has not warranted in any way the agreement of any comrade with the proposal.

We are desirous of obtaining the maximum possible contributions to the League's work from every leading comrade and on the best-ordered and organized basis. In view of the situation, therefore, we make the following counterproposal to be in effect for the coming period, until the League's position requires its revision:

1. That in comrade Swabek's absence in Europe, the secretarial work be conducted by a secretariat composed of comrades Cannon and Abern.
2. That under the supervision of the NC this secretariat shall divide the current work of the national office among its two members.
3. That until the financial improvement of the League's position warrants the payment (and not merely the promise of payment, which is all that we have been able to give up to now) of the functionaries, the two comrades composing the secretariat shall be requested to carry out the function assigned to them on a

voluntary basis, in such a manner that they will be able to devote the greatest amount of their free time to it. Wherever necessary, other League work in which either of them is engaged shall be transferred to other comrades so as to facilitate their functioning.



For Cannon as National Secretary

by Arne Swabeck and Hugo Oehler⁴²⁵

10 January 1933

This statement was submitted to the January 10 resident committee meeting and attached to the minutes.

The document submitted by comrades Abern and Shachtman on the proposal for comrade Cannon to return to full-time work for the League is a stab at the organization, dictated by personal and factional considerations; dishonest in its contentions and assertions and false in its political motivation.

On the political side of the question their proposal to solve the financial crisis by economy in the organizing staff reflects that superficial concept of the League as a literary circle, a concept which has already done too much harm and which stands in fundamental conflict with our aims to develop the League along the lines of a fighting political movement which utilizes the full time of the most qualified people in the organization and direction of actions in the party and in the class struggle directly.

The system of the complete nonpayment of functionaries which has grown up by default in the recent period—and which they now propose to establish formally in respect to the office of national secretary—is one of the heaviest contributing factors in causing the crisis. The basic weakness of the League is its narrow organization basis, its lack of contact and of organized actions, and its one-sided preoccupation with purely literary propaganda. This state of affairs, which to a certain extent was imposed on the League by circumstances and which served a certain purpose in popularizing the main ideas of the Left Opposition, represents now an outlived

phase in the development of our movement. Any tendency to remain on this spot, to freeze the organization into this narrow mold, carries with it the greatest danger of stagnation and retrogression.

The League must broaden its base, extend its organization, and increase its activities in the Party and the class struggle. The first step in this direction is not to weaken the staff but to strengthen it. This is the concept motivating our proposal to call now on the full-time services of comrade Cannon, the most experienced and qualified comrade in the League. The proposal of comrades Abern and Shachtman to restrict the functioning of comrade Cannon to the service he can render in spare time while working for a living elsewhere and, besides that, to encumber him with a paralyzing division of functions and useless "assistance," can only tend to narrow down the scope of our activities, to render the financial crisis chronic, and to consecrate the League to stagnation as a literary circle. The differences reflected in the contrasting proposal are not mere disagreements over a "practical" matter. They go to the heart of the conflict between us concerning the *kind* of an organization that is to be built, its opportunities, perspectives, and tasks—a conflict which is going deeper and taking on a fundamental character.

To dispense with professional functionaries; or to restrict their selection to those having private means of support; or to propose an editor as the sole full-time functionary of the League—this corresponds in no way with the true conception of the present tasks of the League, with its possibilities and resources even as it is constituted today, and it shuts off any perspective of its rapid development and mobility in a situation which is rich in the prospect of big changes and shifts in the working-class movement and in the movement of Communism. The course now must be to tighten the organization internally to strengthen its political-organizing staff, to establish Communist discipline and responsibility, to cleanse the League of triflers, windbags, and bohemians, to insist on activities and sacrifices from every member. The Bolshevik struggle for these aims is inextricably bound up with any serious orientation toward increased and more effective participation in the class struggle and in the Party movement. Talk of the latter without supporting the former is only phrasemongering that will not lead the League one step forward, but on the contrary can only retard its progress.

The concrete counterproposal regarding the work of the national office of the League made by comrades Abern and Shachtman conflicts with our view of the matter no less fundamentally than does their whole general concept of the problem under consideration. The national secretary of the League, in our conception, is not to be simply an "administrator" of various "enterprises." The function is not a sum of technical and administrative duties to be divided between two or more comrades. For the necessary work of a technical character the League has adequate forces which can volunteer their services to assist the secretary or be drafted for this purpose. The business administration of the *Militant* and the Pioneer Publishers is already in competent hands and constitutes no problem. The function of the national secretary is to organize and direct the activities of the League from a political point of view according to the policies and decisions of the NC. In an organization of the size of the League it is a farce to speak of two secretaries. The political and organizing direction requires a concentration. The thing is to select the one who is best qualified, who is ready to assume the full responsibility and to take the risks of economic personal survival. This is the meaning of our proposal of comrade Cannon for the post.

In the attempts to dispute the *qualifications* of comrade Cannon for the office of national secretary and the objections to his appointment on this ground, comrades Abern and Shachtman reveal once again—as in their opposition to the sending of an international delegate—that narrow factional attitude that strikes directly at the interests of the movement. The opposition to comrade Cannon's return to full-time work at the moment when the League and the movement generally stand in the greatest need of his services to the fullest extent comes with characteristic consistency from the very people who up till yesterday led a personal agitation against comrade Cannon because he didn't devote his full time to the League. The personal campaign against comrade Cannon, carried on with such venomous slander and in such a contradictory manner, bears its real character on its face. It is not based in the least degree on his lack of "qualifications"; it is not a criticism of his weakness but a tribute to his strength, as is the case with the campaign of the enemies of the Left Opposition in America who, from the first to last, have directed their slanders

to the personal address of comrade Cannon. The campaign in the League on the same lines merely rides on the waves of prejudice set in motion by the agitation in part and caters to the weakest, most backward, and most susceptible elements in the League who are influenced by this agitation.

The attempt to undermine the solidly grounded prestige of comrade Cannon, and now the bolder attempt to challenge his qualifications for the post of national secretary, can only alarm the experienced and tested militants of the League who know the leaders and also know how to appraise them. The more helpless the group of Abern and Shachtman finds itself in the conflict where political considerations are involved, the more reckless becomes their purely factional course. Commencing only a few months ago with protests against an alleged design to eliminate them in a protest that never had the slightest foundation in fact—they are already demonstrating in practice a real program of elimination of their own. In the New York branch where, by an unprincipled combination with the Carter group and with various other elements in disagreement with the NC and with each other, they have a majority, the factional course has already led to the elimination of all but *two* supporters of the NC from a branch executive committee of *eleven* members, to their exclusion from all important subcommittees, to the system of the crassest factional abuse of the chairmanship at meetings, to the course of insulting and baiting of the NC majority and the creation of an atmosphere of split.

Now, by their document under consideration, they proceed to announce their program for the national organization in the same sense—to eliminate comrade Cannon and those most closely associated with him from the national functionary staff, if not from the NC itself. This is what is really involved in the factional struggle for control of the League by the block of Shachtman-Carter. That it signifies for the disintegration of the League and its political disorientation is written all too plainly in the false positions they have taken every time they have come forward with an independent policy against that of the NC. The reckless factional progress of the Shachtman group is a direct menace to the life of the League.

The political and personal objections to the return of comrade Cannon to full-time work in the League are supplemented in the document of comrades Abern and Shachtman by "financial" arguments. Our proposal to lift the League out of the crisis by

strengthening its staff, expanding its activities and thereby its financial revenue, is represented simply as a proposal to add so many dollars to a budget already out of balance. By that they seek to construe the proposal not as a benefit to the League but as a burden to it. And some of the less conscious immediate followers are already agitating against the proposal as a personal benefit to comrade Cannon. With this the ground is laid to sabotage the contributions which would be required to carry out our proposal and then to attribute the ensuing financial difficulties of the League to the wages taken by comrade Cannon. We have seen a sample of these tactics in the sabotage of the international delegate fund which met with a complete boycott from the Shachtman faction.

Among Communists who have raised themselves above the crude prejudices of such primitive movements as the IWW, the necessity for professional functionaries has been recognized and defended, their personal disinterestedness had not been questioned without good reasons, they have not been considered *per se* as exploiters of the movement, and they have been respected in their calling. Among all those who have devoted themselves to the movement in America to our knowledge no one has a better right to this respect than comrade Cannon. In entering the employment of the party, in remaining in it, and in leaving it, he showed his personal disinterestedness no less than any other revolutionists. His record in this respect is known. Not even the Stalinists, who spared few slanders, ever ventured to impugn it. In none of the inner-party struggles, from the foundation of the Party onward, was the accusation of any motive of personal financial gain ever directed against comrade Cannon; or, so far as our knowledge goes, against any other leading professional workers.

It remained for the partisans of Shachtman and Abern—in the Left Opposition—to circulate this nauseating calumny. The document of Abern and Shachtman is a direct incitement on the “money question” to the ignorant, the backward and demoralized elements who are infected with syndicalistic prejudices against the payment of functionaries and to the petty bourgeois-minded who measure in money. We know quite well that such a foul agitation will weigh heavily against the success of comrade Cannon’s work as national secretary, at least in its first stages. But in spite of that we insist on our motion and we urge comrade Cannon to take up the assignment and at the same time the Communist battle against

such alien arguments and methods. The very fact that such degenerate sentiments can exist in our ranks and that leaders can be found to exploit them is a fearful warning of internal danger to the League. An intransigent Bolshevik fight is necessary to combat it. Comrade Cannon has the duty to lead this fight, even though the alien, anticommunist sentiments are directed, in the present instance, against him personally.



On Assuming the Post of National Secretary

by James P. Cannon⁴²⁶

10 January 1933

This statement was attached to the minutes of the January 10 resident committee meeting that considered the proposal for Cannon to assume the post of national secretary in Swabeck's absence at a weekly wage of \$25. The committee deadlocked, with Swabeck and Oehler voting for, Abern and Shachtman against, and Cannon abstaining. Swabeck then moved to accept Cannon's offer to take the post on a voluntary basis. Cannon voted for this motion, which passed over the continued objections of Abern and Shachtman.

I agree fully with the main point of view outlined in the statement of comrades Swabeck and Oehler, insofar as the fundamental questions are concerned, and think this is the direction the League must take. And I am ready, as I said at the previous meeting, to take the responsibility and all that it involves on my part in accepting the office of national secretary, not simply as a temporary measure. My aim and desire is to devote my time exclusively from now on to professional work for the movement as long as the movement finds my services acceptable.

Together with comrades Swabeck and Oehler I am in favor of a Bolshevik fight on the fundamental issues involved and will do my part in it in any case. But I doubt the wisdom of allowing myself to become the center of a "money argument" as is now indicated. It is hardly compatible with the dignity of a revolutionist. Besides that, a dispute on these grounds would undoubtedly have a strong

tendency to obscure the really important and fundamental questions in dispute, add to the demoralization, and also militate against the solution of the financial crisis.

For these reasons I think it best to remove the "money question" insofar as it relates to me personally and to accept the post of national secretary on a voluntary basis. I will give all the time I can; as long as my personal resources and credit hold out I will give my whole time. The conference will have to decide the fundamental disputes concerning the character, the tasks, and the perspectives of the League as an organization. The disposition of my services will follow logically from that, one way or the other. On this point I will neither present demands, nor refuse responsibilities. It is a matter for the League to decide.



No Financial Sabotage

by Martin Abern and Max Shachtman⁴²⁷

23 January 1933

This statement was submitted to the resident committee meeting of February 4 and attached to the minutes. Abern and Shachtman here refer to a resident committee meeting on 15 December 1932 where the charges of financial sabotage were discussed. In a 17 September 1932 letter to the Minneapolis branch, Tom Stamm had written:

The financial crisis is still raging here like a typhoon. As far as I can see the minority is sitting tight on this question and letting us struggle as though we were in a quicksand, getting in deeper in our efforts to extricate ourselves. Their contribution to the solution of the problem is to make it appear that we were inefficient in the running of the office and the handling of finances.

The resident committee rejected Shachtman's motion to censure Stamm for his letter, in favor of a motion by Cannon to ask Stamm to separate his personal factional correspondence from CLA business affairs. Swabeck submitted a statement, appended to the minutes, that he opposed Shachtman's motion

not because I approve of the method of comrade Stamm, but because it is an established fact that comrades Abern and Shachtman have upon

several occasions failed to collaborate with the NC in its efforts to raise sufficient finances to keep the League going, which failure has in some instances necessitated specific motions that these comrades support before the membership motions by the NC. Similarly, comrades in the New York branch who are in the most favorable economic positions have failed to collaborate in the financial emergency of the League.

Three questions have arisen recently in the National Committee over which disputed views were put forward. The committee's minutes contain statements on these questions presented in the name of the Cannon group. In order to obtain the greatest clarity on the disputes it has become necessary for us to express the viewpoint of the undersigned.

1. "Financial sabotage." For some time the dirtiest gossip and insinuations have been directed against us by supporters of the Cannon-Swabeck faction, inspired by its leaders, concerning our alleged "financial sabotage" of the League. This weapon in our internal controversies is borrowed directly from the days of the worst factional corruption in the Party. The contending factions would hurl it at each other indiscriminately, with an indignation that almost concealed the fact that they were all engaged in misusing Party funds for factional purposes. In the present case, the accusation is evidently being made in order to "clear" the atmosphere from the "poisonous agitation" which our accusers ascribe to us. Despite our demands, not the slightest attempt has been made to corroborate these insinuations either with formal charges against us, preferred in the regular manner, or with proof of their correctness. This failure alone suffices to rob the accusation of any seriousness. Our challenge to comrade Basky, who promised at one meeting to bring proofs of our "sabotage," ended with his promise and nothing more. A similar demand made by us against comrades Swabeck and Stamm—on the occasion when the latter had to be formally reprimanded even by his colleagues on the National Committee for the factional abuse of his office—has met with a similar failure to present concrete charges, much less proofs. The statement in the National Committee of 15 December 1932 by comrade Swabeck impels us to put the whole question sharply in an attempt to force out into the open those who slander us and our friends; either to prefer charges and bring proofs, or else to stop playing such a dirty game once and for all.

Financial sabotage is organizational sabotage. It is not a slight matter and must be settled immediately and finally. Our “financial sabotage” consists in the following: For several years, comrade Abern gave his full time to the League work at an insignificant wage. The same holds true of comrade Shachtman. In addition, Shachtman has been working full-time as editor of the *Militant* for the last seven months without receiving a single penny in wages, a service which comrade Swabeck has also been compelled to render the League by reason of our poor financial condition. Comrades Lewit and Bleeker, also “financial saboteurs,” have been giving the last 12 months of their full time to the League in the Jewish work (managing and editing *Unser Kampf*). They have not drawn a single penny in wages during the whole of this period; quite the contrary—they contributed the last of their personal funds to keep the work going. The largest and most generous contributions made by the New York branch to the maintenance of the center have come almost invariably from a large and diversified group of comrades who support the minority of the National Committee. Loans made for the national office have been taken out and paid for by our supporters in the New York branch. Both the Boston and Chicago branches stand at the top in financial contributions.

The Swabeck statement that “specific motions” were required to make us “support before the membership motions by the NC” is a conscious falsehood, nothing less. The “specific motions” made were exclusively for the purpose of building up a “record” in the minutes for utilization in the factional struggle. As every member knows, neither Shachtman nor Abern have been remiss in urging the members of the NY branch to give the greatest possible financial assistance to the organization, especially in times of emergency.

This contemptible insinuation against us is aimed to be a sort of weapon held in reserve in the dark, to be drawn against us whenever it suits the requirements of the Cannon-Swabeck faction or else as a facile explaining away of the fact that the financial condition of the League becomes acute from time to time.

Because of the seriousness with which we take the insinuations—and they can be taken in no other way—and because unless they are settled definitely in one way or another, they will continue to pollute the atmosphere of the League, we demand the establishment of a control commission to hear the case and arrive at a final decision.

2. Comrade Swabeck's trip to the preconference. We wish to reaffirm our opposition to the sending of comrade Swabeck to represent the League at the preliminary conference of the ILO and to visit comrade Trotsky in Prinkipo. Our opposition to the proposal under present circumstances does not make us any the less internationalists than did the insistence upon it make the majority of the NC "more internationalistic." The attempt to present the division in this sense is deserving of the same reply we give to the charges of "sabotage" dealt with above.

The main purpose of comrade Swabeck's trip is to lay before comrade Trotsky and the European Opposition the faction standpoint of his group in the National Committee. This he has a perfect right to do. The official motivations (for they have already been changed once or twice), however, are not sufficient grounds in our opinion for sending a delegate at the present time, nor have they ever been uppermost in the minds of the National Committee majority. The first proposal was to send Swabeck posthaste to participate in the mythical Copenhagen conference. Its advocates at the time "took it for granted" that comrade Trotsky went to Copenhagen for the express purpose of holding an international conference of the Left Opposition. They proposed sending comrade Swabeck there on the totally unwarranted assumption that Trotsky was to stay in Denmark for a few months. The attempts made now to picture the gathering of many European comrades, who hastened spontaneously to Denmark upon learning of comrade Trotsky's trip there, as the "international conference" simply does not fit in with the facts. In a public statement, comrade Trotsky denied as a Stalinist report the story that he had come to Copenhagen to hold an international Opposition conference. Further, in a confidential circular to all Opposition members, comrade Gourov declares: "When Stalin communicated by radio to the capitalist police about a 'Trotskyist conference' assembling in Copenhagen this was a lie. Having come by accident, the Copenhagen trip necessarily took the Left Opposition by surprise....A conference unfortunately did not take place and by the course of things could not take place." We do not deal here with the indisputable value of the gathering which did take place in Copenhagen and its valuable results. To conceive of it as the "conference" which Swabeck-Cannon-Oehler "took it for granted" would take place, is, however, ridiculous. We advocated then, as

we do now, a serious participation by the American League in a well prepared international conference. To send a delegate across on ten minutes' notice without even the slightest attempt to have a discussion in the membership of the League—to say nothing about the National Committee itself—about the problems confronting the international Opposition, so that our delegate might really participate fruitfully in the conference—such a procedure makes a caricature and a phrase out of our internationalism. Only when we raised a protest against this procedure and demanded that we discuss the situation in the international Opposition and, above all, make arrangements for elaborating a document on the situation in the United States as a whole and the American League in particular, was a purely “record” motion adopted. A “commission” was set to work out such a document to be sent along with comrade Swabeck. To this day, the commission has neither been called together, nor has it met, nor has it written a single line.

The arrangements for a preconference in Paris do not invalidate our objections. The preconference is intended primarily for the preparations of the regular international conference of the LO. It was not conceived by the secretariat as the regular conference in which *all the sections should participate*. Its call, which is omitted from the circular sent out two weeks ago by comrade Cannon as secretary, reads: “3. To the preconference will be invited only the European and Russian sections. The other sections are not invited only for material and financial reasons. In any case, if other sections will declare their ability to participate it is agreed that they will have that right.”

To send a delegate from America to this preconference is an unwarranted outlay of funds at the present moment of intensely severe financial crisis in the League. This must be said plainly, regardless of the demagogic and disdainful charges of playing to “syndicalist prejudices.” We do not base our internationalism nor our duty to participate actively and directly in the life of the ILO on financial considerations—that goes without saying. We left that, in the past, to comrade Cannon when he opposed sending Shachtman to Europe. But in the present case, it is a practical question. Virtually right after comrade Swabeck's return, the League will be confronted with the necessity of sending a delegation (probably two comrades) to the regularly convened international conference which is even now being prepared. To such a conference,

the American League will be deeply obligated to send delegates. In addition, its delegates will have had, we hope, the advantage of going after a thorough preliminary discussion of our international problems in the League and in the National Committee—a discussion of a more serious and real character than that which was begun and ended with the recent “record motion” in the National Committee. To argue that it is a good thing for the League to send a delegate even to the preconference is to beg the question entirely. It would also have been a good thing for the League and the ILO to have had a permanent American representative all this time in the International Secretariat. That has been and is a perspective for us. Up to now we have not realized it, nor have we attempted to, for the practical “syndicalist”(!) consideration of the financial difficulties involved. It is sheer hypocrisy and demagoguery to deny that the same difficulties, which are of such an extreme nature in the League at the present moment, should have been taken into consideration by the National Committee in action on the proposal to send Swabeck to Europe at the present time.

3. Comrade Cannon’s nomination as secretary. The statements submitted by Swabeck, Oehler, and Cannon, intended solely for public consumption, are the most scurrilous documents yet written in our internal dispute. They are filled from beginning to end with falsehood, deliberate distortion of facts, and outright calumny. To reply to all the questions they raise would require an answer twice their length. We can deal here only with their salient features.

The statement reeks of the detestable spirit of the messianic personal cult worship which we always considered alien to the International Left Opposition. This is not, it is true, the first time that Cannon has identified the Opposition with himself, but it is the first time it has been done so crudely. We decline to accept the theory that Cannon and the Left Opposition are one and the same thing; that a criticism of him is equivalent to an attack upon the League. What he seeks to introduce into the Opposition—not for the first time—is the unbelievable conception that stigmatizes any criticism of Cannon as emanating only from Stalinists, or those who ride “on the waves of prejudice set in motion by the agitation of the Stalinists and the right wing.” We will miss no opportunity to combat this monarchical theory of lese majesty which is a disgrace to the Left Opposition.

Our proposal to put comrade Cannon and Abern in charge of the secretarial work of the League, on the basis of voluntary contributions of their time, was a purely practical one. No attempt is made in the Cannon-Swabeck-Oehler statement to give a concrete refutation of the arguments advanced by us to support our proposal. The broad generalizations about the need of maintaining paid functionaries in the League are absolutely meaningless, as our whole past experience, particularly in the last seven or eight months, has shown. Every assurance given thus far, every "resolution" and "motion" adopted solemnly and with the best intentions, has remained on paper. Is this a fact or not? Has comrade Swabeck's complete failure to pay himself or Shachtman (the two "paid" functionaries in the League) any wages for more than half a year been due to his "syndicalistic" tendencies, "dictated by personal and factional considerations," "dishonesty," or has it been due to the practical inability—at least up to now—of the League to meet its budget? Only a blind and deaf man can fail to see that it was the latter reason. Has a single concrete proposal yet been brought before the National Committee to show how the budget is to be arranged so that Cannon and Shachtman may even begin to be paid the sums originally proposed by the former? Not even the attempt has been made. Do we gain a single inch by cheap and empty generalizations about the "need" of paid functionaries or by the routine resolutions stating that they "should" be paid—at a time when our financial crisis makes each week's appearance of the *Militant* a questionable prospect? Quite the contrary, we are only practicing self-deception thereby. The cold fact is that the League's income does not at present permit the payment of any functionaries. What it may be three months from now is another question. That the League must strive to extend its activities and consequently its income so that it is possible to employ the most capable comrades for their full time—of that there has never been any question in our minds, nor could there have been. With that highly desirable and necessary aim in mind, we provided in our counter-motion for a reconsideration of the financial aspects of the secretaryship as soon as the income even begins to make possible a concrete and semirealizable proposal. To attribute to us any other views is tantamount to conscious misrepresentation.

The pathetic war cry sounded by the majority that we "want

to starve out comrade Cannon" has exactly as much foundation as would have the equally preposterous charge that Swabeck, because of his inability to pay wages to himself or to Shachtman, wanted to starve himself and Shachtman out of working for the League. The same contempt is deserved by the argument that we are seeking to prevent Cannon from contributing his services to the movement, in which we are presumably manifesting a new one of those "fundamental differences" with the Cannon faction which it has just invented: "our" "literary circle" spirit. The only comrade that has stood in the way of Cannon's contributing his services to the League up to now has been Cannon himself, and no amount of vile abuse can cover up the incontestable records in this respect. We criticized Cannon in the early days of the Opposition for his gross neglect of the secretarial work which the National Committee and the First National Conference has charged him to carry out. His reply to our comradely criticism was to retire completely from the work, leaving the job in the hands of comrade Abern, who kept the League together on a national scale while it was being boycotted by Cannon, who now disparages and sneers at Abern's contributions. Since that time, comrade Cannon's contributions to the work of the League have been the outstanding and notorious example of precisely that "literary circle" type which he now fulminates against on paper, with the same violence he employed in attacking our proposal a few months ago (before the phrase "participation in the class struggle" became so "popular") that Swabeck or Oehler leave the office for a couple of weeks to organize in the Illinois coalfields during the high point of the miners' strike movement. It is simply another invention to assert that we "up till yesterday led a personal agitation against comrade Cannon because he didn't devote his full time to the League." We have never demanded that of any comrade whose personal circumstances made it difficult or impossible. We have criticized him in the past—and so has virtually every member of the League, Swabeck and Oehler not excluded—for not having devoted his spare time to the work of the organization to the extent that the League has the full right to expect and demand of any member, to say nothing of a leading comrade. This criticism has been part of that "reckless factional program of the Shachtman group (which) is a direct menace to the life of the League." The

rabid subjective reaction shown each time the criticism was made has been due solely to the fact that it was thoroughly justified.

The ardent defense comrade Cannon makes of himself against the nonexistent charge that he is seeking "personal benefit" is very melodramatic, but quite unnecessary—as "unnecessary" as his own charge that Shachtman is a place-hunter whose services to the movement are meant to advance his own "career." The indignant protests are made at straw men and are "meant for the public." The solemn ABC lessons on the falsity of the IWW conceptions and on syndicalism are of the same caliber. The only comrade who is distinctly infected with these and similar views in the New York branch is comrade Schwalbe. He is allowed to air his syndicalistic prejudices in the New York branch without comment from his factional associates in the Cannon group. He is conscientiously given factional protection by this same group which talks so glibly about Communist principle but continues to foster the prejudices of the new and backward elements in the League in the name of the class struggle which, it has discovered, is raging in the American Left Opposition.

It is unfortunate that valuable time must be spent on writing such statements as the present. But we are compelled to resort to this means of making clear our position, by the fact that the Cannon group continues to fill the records of the NC with slanderous and demagogic factional attacks upon us. They are intended to "prepare the ground" for the national conference of the League, at which this faction plans and hopes to deliver a final annihilating blow at us on the grounds of those "fundamental differences in principle" which the self-styled "revolutionary kernel" has been concocting for the past year. In going further with these ruinous methods, the Cannon group is only continuing to play that dangerous factional game which has, on more than one occasion already, brought upon it the merited reprimand of the majority of the League's membership.



Cannon a New Man in Chicago

Letter by Albert Glotzer to
Martin Abern and Max Shachtman⁴²⁸

6 February 1933

This letter recounts Cannon's visit to Chicago after speaking at a Trades and Labor Council conference in Gillespie, Illinois on January 29. Called to consider the creation of a new trade-union federation to challenge the AFL, the conference was backed by the newly founded Progressive Miners of America. More than half of the 170 delegates were PMA members. Cannon's speech against founding a new federation made a big impact on the conference; his report in the Militant noted, "The conference revealed most convincingly that the organizational basis for a new general labor movement is by no means sufficient at the present time, and the project was taken off the agenda. Instead of that, a realistic program of agitation to coordinate the work of militants inside and outside the AFL was adopted."⁴²⁹

I have been ill for the last few days and could not write about some of the recent events here.

1. At the meeting where the discussion of the NC statement on the plenum results took place, the following sums up the situation. The "old" comrades of the branch, plus those who for all practical purposes are no aid to the branch, supported the majority of the NC because of "stability," "experience," etc., etc. They include Buzzy, Booth, Mashow, Judd, Martin. Of these only Buzzy is a member of the executive committee. Booth because of circumstances cannot be very active, although he is doing work in the Jewish field. Mashow is an anchor upon the branch and the unanimous opinion of *all* comrades is that it was a mistake to take him into the League. Martin likewise because of circumstances is inactive. Judd cannot be counted as a supporter of the majority.

In support of our point of view are: Edwards, Sacherow, Giganti, Bornstein, and myself. Four are members of the executive committee. Bornstein up until a few months ago was the most active member of the branch. Satir and Gould support neither

group because they do not see on what political basis they could support one group or the other when there are no obvious political differences. Both however expressed serious differences with the majority methods of carrying on internal struggle, Satir especially so. They are waiting for the preconference material and discussion in order to ally themselves one way or the other. Ritz is a new member and I can say little about him. I enclose a copy of a letter I received from Hamilton in reply to a copy of the statement I sent him (our statement on the results of the plenum discussion). You can judge from that his point of view and I am of the opinion that either of you two comrades should drop him a line. That, I think, sums up the position of the branch members. At the discussion I opened up on the statement of the majority on the plenum results and showed how it falsified figures, its attempts to win votes through petty factional trickery, its utterly false perspective on the solution of the internal struggle. I have no doubt that our point of view does make an impression on all the comrades, including those who are for stability and experience. I got a good laugh out of Gould when citing the figures on the votes. Gould just came back from Kansas City and met the whole branch, but for the life of him he can't remember all the comrades. No matter how hard he tries he can only remember one comrade. Undoubtedly he did not stay long enough to meet the other two "Swabeck comrades."

The most active comrades of the branch, those who really count and make up almost the whole of the executive committee, support us. But the real test here will come in the preconference period, during the discussion when we shall have to carry on a struggle not only on the questions of organization, which are fundamental in themselves, but likewise on questions of program. Then we shall be able to tell precisely where we stand. Incidentally no vote or decision was taken anyway on the statement of the National Committee on the plenum results.

2. The second great event was Cannon's arrival and the meeting we had with him. I should have written about this last week, but as I stated in the beginning, illness prevented me from writing.

I must declare that I met a new Jim, if only for that night. Briefly, I shall tell you his attitude. He was very cordial!?! The narrative: We did not quite understand the situation in Illinois. We were too far away to really grasp the significance of the mass

movement and have lost valuable time. There are great possibilities for our movement if we concentrate our forces in the field. The coal situation may be the means to open up a new stage in the development of the American League. It will help us break from our shell of isolation and get into some mass work. The organization has been stagnating somewhat (!) and we have an opportunity now to do real class-struggle work. We must take advantage of the situation and I am amazed with the possibilities. I shall propose to the NC that I return and spend two months in the coalfields. Then we must have somebody there permanently. The whole League must be mobilized for a big campaign of the Left Opposition in the coalfields. Retreat is impossible. We cannot afford to retrench! Retrenchment means further stagnation and retreat. We must go forward! And so, ad infinitum.

He was enthused or at least appeared that way. This was the first time I heard him speak in this fashion for at least four years. And I am sure that Swabeck would have been the most discomforted man to have heard the remarks he made. I must say that for a moment I thought one of us was speaking. He explained that four years of work on a lousy job warps one's perspective and prevents him from seeing straight, or words to that effect, and that, now he has gotten out into activity and made contact with masses of workers, he has a new slant on things and wants above all work and work and work. He will go back to New York and lay before the comrades the same report he made to us in Chicago, get the whole organization behind the campaign, and return to work in the Illinois coalfields.

It is this kind of stuff that makes a good impression on those who support the majority. Our comrades, I think, did not misunderstand Jim nor his remarks. Gould smiled because this was all so new and surprising, and certainly did not sound like the majority statement on the results of the plenum. But all of us will not be the comrades to prevent the work that Cannon speaks of. Quite the contrary, the comrades are willing to do everything possible to carry through such activity. What they cannot understand is Jim's remarks. It was enthusiasm plus. I am anxious to know what kind of a report he made in New York. Here he did not revert to the inner situation once. He only spoke of a change in the line of the League toward greater participation in the class struggle and mass work! Build the League, break from the isolation and stag-

nation! Warm and happy! That describes him during the few hours he was here.

So you see I am really anxious to know if he carried this pose with him to NY, to learn if he maintained the same attitude with the New York comrades and in the NC in order to know just how much of a pose he really made and what was the actual aim he had in mind.

The *Freiheit* reports the dissolution of the German Opposition. I assume it refers to the capitulation of Well and Senin. It speaks of a third leader. Who might that be? Incidentally, I know nothing about the German situation except bare outlines, nor of the situation in Spain or in France. It seems to be an unwritten law that comrades living outside of the center are doomed to ignorance of what transpires in the international movement. I know that letters have come from the Old Man, statements and resolutions are received containing information. But so far I haven't received as much as an indication of the situation in Europe. Won't you comrades do something about it?

International Bulletin no. 17 has not reached us yet. Why I don't know.

I received a few sets of minutes but all of these or most of them are old. I don't know what actually transpired in the meeting of the committee except what Marty wrote with regard to the war congress. I'd like to know what reasons they gave for their motions. Needless to say, he mentioned nothing to me about the affair when he was here.

What information do you have on the Lovestone split? I read the item in the *Freiheit* this morning about the split, and I suppose that the *Militant* will carry additional items in the next issue.⁴³⁰ But I would like to have the real inside dope on the situation and I think you can supply it. Do you know what Minnie Lurye's position is?

Incidentally, I wonder why the sub I sent in was not recorded in the *Militant* among subs gotten in the drive. Would you comrades call it an oversight?

As soon as Marty's article on the student question is complete I shall send one too, in support of his point of view. What does Max think of the question?

Geltman is in town on the way to New York. When he arrives, make it a point to have a discussion with him without delay. I think

you will find his point of view altered considerably. I will see him today and have a discussion on these questions.

Did Cannon report the contact we have with Verblin?⁴³¹ If not I can write details later.

With best regards to all the comrades. Did Weber get the note I sent him? Ask him to write.



Resolution on the Proletarianization of the New York Branch

by the National Committee [Cannon Group]⁴³²

[Early February 1933]

After discussion in two consecutive meetings of the resident committee in September 1932, this undated resolution was submitted to the branch executive in October in the name of the NC over the opposition of Shachtman and Abern.⁴³³ After the executive rejected it by a vote of four to two, Cannon was assigned to present the resolution to the branch at a meeting in early February.⁴³⁴ Cannon later described the local discussion about his proposal:

The single proposal to take in no petty-bourgeois elements for the period of six months called forth an attack against the NC which sponsored the proposal, and against us personally, that cannot be described in words. All the militancy that has been so painfully lacking in the struggle against the Stalinists, especially in the needle trades, was supplied with double measure against us.⁴³⁵

The NC recommends to the New York branch executive committee that it adopt the following for consideration by the branch as a joint resolution of the National Committee and the branch executive committee.

In order to improve the class composition of the organization and to provide a firmer foundation for a greatly increased activity in the class struggle in a systematic, planned, and organized manner, the NY branch decides:

1. For the next six months to admit only bona fide proletarians to membership.

2. All others applying for membership in this period (excepting those now on probation) shall be enrolled as sympathizers and assigned to regular duties and tasks suitable to their abilities and opportunities under the direction of the branch executive committee without prejudice to their right to become members of the League later.
3. The workers admitted to membership under the terms of this motion shall be required, as a condition for membership, to agree to become members of their respective trade unions (where initiation fees or other restrictions are not prohibitive) and to carry on active work within them. Workers in unorganized trades or industries shall take the initiative to form unions where possible or to enroll themselves in one or another non-Party workers mass organization according to the circumstances in each case, as the branch executive may direct. Unemployed workers shall join the unemployed councils or similar organizations.
4. This motion to restrict membership to workers only is designed as a special measure for a definite period and is not laid down as a principle. Intellectuals have a place and function in the League, but this function can be fulfilled most fruitfully under the condition of a strong preponderance of active revolutionary workers in the organization.
5. The branch organizer stands instructed to call, within two weeks' time, a general meeting of all branch members now affiliated to trade unions for a general discussion of the problem of trade-union work and the working out of practical plans to organize and develop it.
6. Similar meetings of all branch members now affiliated to non-Party mass organizations shall also be organized within three weeks for the same general purpose.
7. Following this a special meeting shall be called of all members not now affiliated to trade unions or other mass organizations for a concrete consideration of ways and means of deciding on such an affiliation in each case, to one organization or another.
8. The goal of the campaign is to realize the slogan: "Every member of the League an active member in a mass organization."
9. The branch meetings and discussions in the next period shall be conducted in conformity with this orientation of our work.

Discussion of general political questions, as a rule, shall be conducted at special meetings called for this purpose. Regular meetings shall prominently feature reports of the work of the fractions in unions and other organizations and action on them.

10. The NC proposes a joint meeting with the branch executive committee to discuss the proposal to present this resolution as a joint recommendation.



Reject the Proposal on the Proletarianization of the New York Branch

by the New York Executive Committee
[Shachtman Group]⁴³⁶
[Early February 1933]

*This undated response to the National Committee resolution on proletarianization was submitted to the New York branch in the name of its executive committee. Later in the month the resident committee and the New York branch executive held a joint meeting to discuss dividing the branch into three units: Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. The division was supported in broad outline by both groups.*⁴³⁷

The New York branch has before it a proposal to close the books of the branch to all applications for membership in the League except those who are “bona fide workers belonging to mass organizations.” The executive committee of the branch recommends the rejection of this proposal on the following grounds:

1. It is in violation of the Constitution of the Communist League of America which makes the following provision for application to membership in the organization and no other provision: “Article IV, Section 1. All those who subscribe to the principles and tactics laid down in the first four congresses of the CL, who accept the platform of the Communist League, and who agree to abide by its discipline and engage actively in its work shall be eligible to membership in the Communist League.”
2. The proposal attempts to create the impression that the per-

centage of nonworker elements in the New York branch is so great as to threaten the proletarian revolutionary character of the organization. As the registration of the branch will show, this is far from being the case. The overwhelming majority of the branch membership are workers engaged in industry or office work or formerly so engaged and now unemployed.

3. Limitation of membership to proletarian elements at one period or another has been confined in the whole history of the Communist movement to the Russian party and no other. This is so because its domination of state power, plus the preponderance of petty-bourgeois elements in the country, has endangered and diluted the proletarian character of the party, especially dangerous when it counts in the millions. Our League, which offers its membership none of the privileges of the Russian party membership, cannot in any sense of the word be put in the same category with the Russian party in this respect. As for other parties, we repeat, the matter has never arisen in such a way as to call forth a proposal like the one before us.

4. One of the main problems confronting the League at present—the most rapid possible elimination of the “circle spirit” which prevails throughout the ranks as a result of various historical circumstances—cannot be solved by such a mechanical proposal. The problem cannot be solved by creating an artificial, potentially dangerous, and confusing class division in the membership. Some of our nonworker comrades are very active members. Other comrades, including some who are workers belonging to mass organizations or able to join them without difficulty, are inactive. Our task is to bring the nonworker comrades closer to active participation in the mass organizations and the general class struggle, and to organize the work in such a systematic manner as will enable the League as a whole to utilize the connections with the masses of workers and their broad organizations which the worker-members already have and are not utilizing, or utilizing in an unorganized, haphazard manner. We can accomplish this task essentially by elaborating planned activity for *all* the members of the League:

- a. By making it obligatory for every member, without exception, to join a mass organization; particularly does this apply to new members who must do this before their probation

period is up, else they should not be accepted as regular members.

- b. By putting our trade-union work and trade-union and other organization fractions on a functioning basis so that the comrades belonging to them shall utilize their membership in them in an organized Communist manner for the Left Opposition.
- c. By the energetic and timely elaboration of our policy for every situation that arises, or every problem confronting these mass organizations, so that our comrades may be able to present our specific point of view in a systematic manner. This manner of organizing our work, of participating systematically and not only journalistically in the everyday struggles of the workers, will do infinitely more to bring to our ranks the worker-revolutionists than any mechanical proposals divorced from the problems of the general work and orientation of the League.

5. While we believe that the branch and the League as a whole should exercise special care in taking into its ranks nonworker elements and should provide special work for them to undertake before their probation period is concluded (as well as afterward), we do not believe that such a proposal as the one before us, with its indefinite and ambiguous characterization, should be adopted for the purpose of excluding automatically and in advance any comrade applying for membership in the League who is not what the proposal designates as a "bona fide worker belonging to a mass organization." Such a proposal can easily create confused ideas among our membership about the real essence of the question (that is, the fundamentally proletarian character of the Communist movement), and lead to the introduction of syndicalistic prejudices into the minds of the comrades.

Motion on the Situation in Germany and the Role of the Red Army

by Max Shachtman⁴³⁸

20 February 1933

This motion was submitted to the February 24 resident committee meeting, attached to the minutes, and published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 10 (18 March 1933).

After Hitler's appointment as German chancellor, the resident committee, by unanimous vote on February 4, decided to make the Militant triweekly to stress the urgency of a proletarian united front. CP supporters concerned by the German events snapped up thousands of Militants. The CLA was also intervening aggressively into the Party-organized unemployed movement. Cannon's speech as official CLA delegate to a January 22 conference of unemployed in New York City was well received and the League followed up with an intervention into a second conference on February 5. Hugo Oehler's highly successful national speaking tour on Germany was scheduled to end in an extended stay in the southern Illinois coalfields, where the League was attempting to solidify its supporters in the PMA.

In February the CLA held a series of forums in New York City on Germany—in Manhattan on the 5th; the Bronx on the 12th; and Brooklyn on the 15th. Hundreds of workers attended the meetings, where Shachtman and Cannon were the principal speakers. Stalinist spokesmen took the floor, attempting to counter the burgeoning impact of the League's agitation for united-front defense of the German working class. In a letter to Trotsky, Shachtman motivated his resolution:

This motion by me in the National Committee was occasioned by the speeches made at our "Germany" meetings by comrade Cannon, in which he falsely raised the slogan for the Red Army to be mobilized now to come to the direct assistance of the German proletariat. "The knife of fascism is poised over the body of the German working class and the Red Army must be mobilized to shoot this knife out of its hand." Such a standpoint enabled the Stalinists and the right wing to launch a demagogic attack upon our position, with the result that our campaign in New York, at least, has been vitiated to a certain extent. That the

Stalinists approach the problem from the nationalistic standpoint of "socialism in one country" does not mean that we may permit ourselves false and harmful formulations with regard to the Red Army. My motion was aimed to have the National Committee take a position without a factional issue being made of the question; that is why no direct criticism is made of Cannon or anyone else. Unfortunately, Cannon has made a counterstatement attacking our standpoint and denying that he had ever advocated the immediate use of the Red Army in Germany.⁴³⁹

With regard to the present situation in Germany and the question of the role of the Red Army, the National Committee adopts the following policy:

The Communists cannot entertain any objections in principle to the use of the present Red Army in the Soviet Union for the purpose of giving direct material assistance to the proletarian revolution and the Communist movements in other countries. We do not regard the Red Army as a "Russian" army but as the army of the international revolutionary proletariat. The fact that the Red Army came to the assistance of the Polish movement in 1920 and gave direct aid to the Georgian proletariat and peasantry in their liberation struggle against foreign imperialism and its Menshevik agents is proof that the Communist International in the Leninist epoch did not consider it wrong in principle for the "Russian" Red Army to carry out revolutionary tasks beyond the "frontiers" of the Soviet Republic. For this reason, it is necessary to reject the prevailing Stalinist opposition to employing the Red Army in the interests of the international revolution as a typical characteristic of national-Bolshevik degeneration of this faction.

The employment of the Red Army outside the "frontiers" of the Soviet Union to help the revolutionary movement triumph in the capitalist countries is not and cannot be a question of dispute in principle for the Marxists. It is and cannot be anything but a tactical question, based upon concrete considerations of time and place and relationship of forces.

The accession of Hitler to power in Germany is a direct threat to the international revolution in general and to the Russian revolution in particular. That is why the International Left Opposition has declared that "the attempt of the fascists to seize power in Germany can bring in its trail nothing less than the mobilization of the Red Army. For the proletarian state, it will be a matter of revolutionary self-defense in a most direct and immediate sense."

The International Left Opposition has not, however, and does not now raise the demand that *at the present time*, in the situation as it is *today*, with the *present* relationship of forces, the Red Army is to be mobilized for the purpose of "marching upon Germany" now. We do not advance this slogan at the present time and regard its propagation as out of harmony with the tactical line of the International Left Opposition on Germany today.

Before the worker masses of Germany have been unequivocally set in motion to resist Hitler, before the sharp cleavage that exists between fascism and the working class has been translated into open civil war in Germany itself, so that the bare proposal of marching the Red Army into Germany would appeal to the German masses as well as to the world proletariat as meaning direct aid to their class in its revolt against bourgeois military dictatorship, such a slogan could only serve to alienate non-Communist workers and drive them into the camp of nationalist reaction. The premature advancing of such a slogan, before civil war in Germany has appeared unmistakably, means laying the ILO open to the charge, on the part of the official CP, of provocation to precipitate war on the Soviet Union. It means that we alienate the sympathies of those Communists who have become orientated toward the Left Opposition on the basis of the complete correctness of our policies in regard to the German situation.

If the Left Opposition is attacked similarly for advocating immediate mobilization of the Red Army, our answer is clear. The correctness of our position on German fascism merely serves then to add emphasis to our analysis of the inevitable international consequences of a fascist victory. This slogan clearly aims to warn the Soviet Union to prepare in good time to defend itself. War in that case comes not on the basis of a Red Army marching into Germany, but because the international Brownshirts are marching on the Soviets.

The propaganda and agitation of our League and the *Militant* is to be conducted in accordance with the above views. This statement of position is to be sent out to all branches as the guiding line of the League for the work of all its members and spokesmen.

The Red Army and the German Revolution

by James P. Cannon

24 February 1933

This draft article was submitted to the February 24 resident committee meeting. With only Abern, Cannon, and Shachtman in attendance, the committee held in abeyance Cannon's motion to print the article in the Militant, but unanimously approved Cannon's motion, "That the discussion of the differences on this question be carried on in the internal bulletin and not in the Militant and that the Militant carry only material reflecting the official standpoint arrived at by the committee." Cannon's article was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 10 (18 March 1933). After receiving Trotsky's "Germany and the USSR," Cannon withdrew his article with the following motion, "In view of the information contained in the article of comrade Trotsky regarding the present capacity of the Red Army to fulfill its role, the article be not published now, but its correctness, theoretically, is reaffirmed."⁴⁰ Shachtman voted against the motion.

Our references, in speeches on the German crisis, to the international role and duty of the Red Army have called forth a furious agitation and incitement against us by the Stalinist bureaucrats. In the press and on the platform they are accusing the Left Opposition of "provocation" to precipitate a war against the Soviet Union. And with this monstrous slander as a covering formula they are turning the internationalist concepts upside down, disorienting the Communist workers, drugging them with murderous doses of national-socialist poison, and closing their eyes to one of the most important and decisive aspects of a fascist victory in Germany. It is high time for an elucidation of this question in the columns of the *Militant*, for it is precisely the function of the internationalists to tell the truth and conceal nothing.

The Stalinist demagoguery around this question is in essence a capitulation before bourgeois public opinion. The Left Opposition has the duty not to retreat before this demagoguery, but to probe it to the bottom and reveal its treacherous implications. It is not

the danger of provoking a war on the Soviet Union that might be avoided. It is the danger that the Soviet Union and the world's working class will be taken unawares and fail of the necessary preparation in a war that is inevitable if fascism triumphs in Germany. That is the danger. That is the crux of the question.

It is hardly necessary to deny that the Left Opposition is demanding that the Red Army "march to Germany" at the present time and under the present conditions. For us it is self-evident that the German working class will organize and conduct its own struggle for power. That is why the Left Opposition concentrates its agitation on the demand for a united front and a program of action to smash fascism and clear the road for soviets in Germany. But in this life-and-death struggle, which will not be settled in a day, the German bourgeoisie will seek and receive the support of international capital—moral, financial, and, if necessary, military. The German working class will also seek and must receive international support in no less degree. To exclude the Red Army from participation in this grandiose world struggle on the side of the German working class on the ground of "protecting the interests of the Soviet Union" is to leave the ground of internationalism; to bind oneself in advance to the national boundary lines established by the bourgeoisie which in crucial moments are not in the least binding on them; and in the final analysis to endanger the existence of the Soviet Union itself.

A fascist victory and consolidation in Germany means an inevitable war on the Soviet Union. A victorious German fascism, which has crushed the working class at home and annihilated its organizations, would become the spearhead of a world attack on the Soviet Union on a scale far surpassing the previous interventions. This war would be accompanied by a worldwide wave of reaction against the labor movement everywhere. Such a war, headed by German fascism, cannot be undertaken now because German fascism is not yet victorious; it has not consolidated its power and established the economic and military basis for such an undertaking. What stands in the way is—the German working class, still powerful, still undefeated. The attempt of fascism to crush the German working class is a necessary preliminary; looked at correctly, it is already the *beginning* of the war. Can the Red Army remain passive and indifferent to the outcome of this struggle on German soil? Can it hesitate for a moment, in case of

need, to throw its weight into the scale *before* the fascization of Germany is completed and the “march on Moscow” formally begins? That is the question which we have raised in our speeches and which evoked the rabid campaign of the Stalinists against us.

Please do not answer this question with acknowledgments of internationalism “in principle” and “in general.” The proletariat was hurled into the bloody pit of the world war in 1914 by people who “had no objections” to internationalism “in principle.” The question of internationalism, now as then, has a meaning in terms of the concrete. The focal point of the international situation at the present time is Germany. Our internationalism and the internationalism of the proletariat in every country, including the Soviet Union and the Red Army, is put to the test there. Here the principled lines must be clearly marked out and the fundamental question given a precise answer. Our reference of course does not deal with the moment and the nature of an intervention by the Red Army on the side of the working class. Such questions naturally belong to the domain of political and military strategy, which in turn depends on an estimation of the conditions, the relation of forces, the tempo of development, etc. As propagandists, our concern now relates to the fundamental question of attitude and not to the actions of the moment.

And here, we affirm our conviction—not “in general,” if you please, but in direct connection with the civil war in Germany—that “the Red Army is not only the Red Army. It is the arm of the proletarian world revolution.” So it was conceived by its founders and organizers. So it was understood by the workers of the entire world and by its own soldiers under the Lenin teaching. Before the Red Army ever existed in reality, before there was any “socialism in one country” or any talk about it, Lenin elucidated the internationalist role of a proletariat (and its army) which would triumph in “several or even in only one individual capitalist country”:

The victorious proletariat of that country (wrote Lenin in 1915) having expropriated the capitalists and organized socialist production, would be up in arms against the rest of the capitalist world, attracting oppressed classes of the other countries to its side, causing insurrection in those countries against the capitalists and acting in case of need even with military power against the exploiting classes and their governments.

And it is known that Lenin was not talking idly and still less was

he “provoking” the capitalists to make war against the proletarian country. For one thing he knew that the capitalist governments needed no such provocation, but only the capacity to make good with their war. He was speaking calmly and deliberately of what a victorious proletariat in a single country should and must do “in case of need.” In Poland in 1920 and in Georgia the Lenin doctrine laid down in 1915 had a literal fulfillment—the latter successfully and the former unsuccessfully. But from the experience in each case, Lenin and all the Marxists with him drew conclusions only of a practical character relating to the situation, the time, the place, and the “need.” The demagogy of the bourgeoisie and their social-democratic lackeys about “red imperialism” influenced his strategy not at all and his principled considerations still less.

Zinoviev, chairman of the Comintern, said in 1919 in a speech to 3,000 military experts of the Petrograd District at the Uritsky Palace:

Military men often object, “but if the war is coming to an end now, what will they do with us?”...First, we must liberate, not only Russia, but also, together with the workers and peasants, the whole world too. The international Red Army will grow. Our Red officers and former officers of long standing will achieve the great honor of supporting in their struggle not only the Russian workers and peasants, but also the workers and peasants of France, Germany, and the other countries. (applause)

There can be no greater honor than this! Is not the bourgeoisie of France and England sending its sons to Taganrog, Novotcherkassk, Odessa, to train the Russian beasts for the struggle against the workers and peasants? With far greater right we shall send our best men to show the French and English workers how to organize the Red Army, overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie, take the power into the hands of the people.

It may be objected: Is it necessary to talk about this ABC question of the international role of the Red Army? Isn't this understood by everybody and is it not best to keep quiet so as not to alarm the class enemy? Yes, it is necessary to speak because, unfortunately, in these days of the Stalinist degeneration there is a lack of understanding and more than that, there is a muddling and distortion of the question which forebodes great evil to the cause of the international proletariat. The very fact that the Stalinist bureaucrats incite against us for our reference to the international role of the Red Army in the German events conceals within it the most treacherous implications. The dogma of

socialism in one country has wrought a fearful havoc in the brains of those who stand before the Communist proletariat in the capacity of official leaders.

Wicks, for example, said at the Bronx meeting that "the Red Army is international in the sense that the workers of the other countries will join it. The German workers will make their own revolution and organize their own Red Army." This half-truth contains a treacherous lie, for it evades and thereby answers in the negative the question of whether the existing Red Army will help the German workers to make their own revolution "in case of need." This is the theory of neutrality toward the civil war of the classes in Germany, of capitulation to bourgeois opinion. If the Russian proletariat is not to intervene, in its own way and with its own means, then why should we in America "intervene," as we are doing now in our own way and with our own means? In this connection it is not without significance that the first meetings of the Party on the German crisis were held three weeks after the appointment of Hitler and only then after the Left Opposition had shaken the whole Party with its campaign and driven the panic-stricken bureaucrats into action.

Yes, it is necessary for the Left Opposition to speak openly about this and every other problem of the German civil war, giving each one its proper place and emphasis at the moment but concealing and soft-pedaling on none. The Left Opposition is a small faction armed with great ideas which have been tested and confirmed in world events. It can grow and expand in numbers and influence only by being true to itself, fearing no incitement, and telling the whole truth to the Communist workers about each and every question. Our mission is to keep alive the doctrine and spirit of internationalism. That cannot be done fully and completely without elucidating the question of the Red Army and the German revolution.

Motion on the Illinois Mining Campaign

by Max Shachtman⁴⁴¹

24 February 1933

This motion was attached to the minutes of the February 24 resident committee meeting attended only by Cannon, Shachtman, and Abern. Cannon submitted a statement for the minutes: "I disagree with the motion as formulated by comrade Shachtman and will submit counterproposals to the committee." He put forward a motion to conduct the discussion on the mining campaign in the Internal Bulletin, and another to publish in the Militant only material on the miners approved by the editorial board. Both were adopted unanimously.

The National Committee adopts the following line of policy with regard to the situation in the Progressive Miners of America and the tasks of the Left Opposition within it:

1. The insurgent movement in and around the PMA is a progressive movement of the rank-and-file miners seeking to rid themselves of bureaucratism, reaction, and class collaborationism as symbolized by the agents of the bourgeoisie, Lewis, Walker, and co. This circumstance determines the support which the Left Opposition gives to this movement.
2. One of the greatest weaknesses of the PMA is the fact that the "Third Period" policies of the official Communist Party have drastically reduced the influence of Communism as such among the members of the PMA, discredited the name and prestige of Communism to a large extent, and isolated the Communists from the organization. This leaves the PMA without a firm Communist nucleus, that is, a revolutionary lever, in its ranks. If it exists and above all if it pursued a correct policy, its presence would be the best guarantee against the degeneration of this miners' movement.
3. The absence of a Communist nucleus in the PMA has made it possible—at least it has been one of the principal factors—for a more or less heterogeneous element to gain control of the movement from the very beginning. The fact that the leadership of the PMA comes largely from the "ranks," that among them are many

“sincere” and “honest” elements, only means that it is possible to win many of them to a genuinely class-struggle standpoint, but does not change the fundamental nature of the ideology of this leadership and the role it plays. A *political estimate* of this leadership and its policies (which it is already possible to make upon the basis of its actions up to now, its official pronouncements, its tendency) leads to the conclusion which is fortified by all experience with such and similar elements in this and other countries: The continued domination of the PMA, unchallenged, by these elements means the certain degeneration of the new union into a reformist, class-collaborationist, or even outright reactionary movement.

4. Of the several forces contending for influence (which means domination, in the last analysis) in the PMA, it is possible to discern the following groups or tendencies: a. a reactionary, anti-Communist, pure-and-simple trade-unionist tendency, which, while apparently not well knit organizationally on a district scale, is closely bound together by its ideology; b. the Socialist Party, particularly the Norman Thomas “militant” wing, which has reestablished its influence and organization to a large extent in the coalfields as a result of a skillful campaign of demagogic support to the new movement and by taking advantage of the weakness of the Communist Party, which formerly held the position of the dominating workers’ party in that field; c. the Muste group (CPLA), which has several of its direct supporters actively engaged in the official work of the PMA and whose dangerous and treacherous ideology is reflected to a large extent by the present official leadership of the PMA; d. a vague, formless, unorganized element of militant rank-and-file miners who are serving as the officials in many posts, among whom there are many sound proletarian elements, who want a “clean and militant union” but who are “militant” *reformists* or less than that; e. the official Communist Party, which objective circumstances have compelled to “drop” the NMU sect and to attach itself to the PMA, with the obvious intention of penetrating and influencing it; f. finally, the Left Opposition, which is directly represented in the movement by its two members and by a certain moderate prestige it enjoys among a small number of miners in some localities.

5. As the problems confronting the PMA increase, as they demand an answer in the course of the struggles and activities in which it

must engage, the position of each of these groups and consequently the groups themselves will become more clearly defined and will be counterposed, one to the other, in increasingly sharp form. The present "vague" and "loose" lines—which are not visible to the masses of the miners, but are fairly distinct to us—will, in a word, take on unmistakable and conflicting form, clear enough for every worker to distinguish. The task of the Left Opposition is to help strengthen the left-wing and Communist line and movement as the best (and only basic) guarantee against the reformist degeneration of the new union.

6. To fulfill this task is a tremendous problem, but we can begin to solve it not so much by skillful maneuvering as by intransigence in principle—even though the two are not mutually exclusive. The first step in this direction is the establishment of the *independent, disciplined, reliable fractions of the Left Opposition*, however small may be the numbers we can rally at the outset on this "narrow" basis. Neither organizational nor political maneuvers can offer a substitute for this quintessential preliminary in point of order or in point of emphasis. One of the main reasons for the purely literary influence to which we are limited in southern Illinois is precisely the fact that we have no such fractions or organizations, that in the past our activity has been largely dissolved into amorphous, unstable, and speedily dissolved "progressive groups" or "educational leagues." The first task of the Left Opposition members and groups (which should be recruited on a broad basis) is to distinguish itself by word and deed (i.e., by policy and conduct) from the other tendencies in the PMA. Without in any way associating ourselves with the false policies of Stalinism, our comrades must maintain an independent and an actively critical attitude not only toward the conservative and reactionary elements in the new union, but especially toward the Socialist Party and the CPLA, which are pursuing an anti-Communist (consequently, an antiprogressive) course in the PMA. But especially in order to make clear the distinction between our opposition to these two organizations and the opposition that may be manifested toward them by other elements (sometimes out of reactionary considerations or out of "pure-and-simple" trade-unionistic considerations), our comrades must also separate themselves from the present leadership of the union, which is not following a course essentially different from

that of the CPLA et al. We cannot make an inch of headway by maintaining a silence of tacit consent by neglecting to make urgently necessary criticism out of "diplomatic" considerations.

7. Up to the present time, we have not dealt with this task in the proper manner. With the exception of one or two comments in the *Militant* with regard to comrade Allard, we have not clearly disassociated ourselves from the standpoints which he has developed in the PMA, as an active leader of it and as editor of its official organ. Meanwhile, it is necessary, unfortunately, to establish the fact that comrade Allard has followed a course which has already served to discredit his revolutionary position and along with it to discredit the Left Opposition. For this the National Committee itself bears a share of the responsibility, but the main burden of it falls upon comrade Allard himself. In no way can we any longer take the slightest responsibility for the editorials he writes in the *Progressive Miner*, which are in flagrant conflict with the line of the Left Opposition. We have come to the point where the extenuating circumstances of comrade Allard's youth and inexperience are far outweighed by the fact that the Left Opposition is being heavily compromised by his position. To occupy the post of editor of the paper of a reformist trade union is already a difficult and dubious position, even in the case of a highly experienced and capable Communist. Here matters are made worse by the fact that comrade Allard's position is most frequently indistinguishable from that of a left social democrat. Instead of marking himself off from the reformist (at best, confusionist) leadership, he has more and more merged his position with that of the latter. Instead of attacking the Socialist Party (of course skillfully, not as if he were editing a Communist paper but nevertheless as if he were a Communist editing a trade-union paper which if progressive should allow free expression of opinion), he declares that he has no quarrel with it. Instead of shattering the miners' illusions in the bourgeoisie, its legislature, and its state governor, comrade Allard has been unwittingly fostering those illusions. It is now imperative for the League to explain patiently and in a comradely manner to comrade Allard the untenable position he is in and the intolerable relationship between his position and that of the Left Opposition—but to do this with the aim of coming *now* to a *final* conclusion in this case. Further delay will not only be of harm

to comrade Allard, but more than that, it will dangerously compromise the League.

8. At the same time, we must also record a very serious shortcoming of the League's position toward the PMA, as revealed by the position taken by our representative, comrade Cannon, at the Gillespie conference. Both the report of comrade Cannon in the *Militant* and the heading are misleading, uncritical, and inadequate. Comrade Cannon was sent to the Gillespie conference in order to present to the delegates there, or to as many as possible, the standpoint of the League. The TUUL, together with other auxiliaries of the Communist Party, not only sent their representatives to the conference, but they appeared in their own name, advanced their policy (such as it was), and were elected on the permanent committee at the end of the conference.

We consider it a serious mistake that comrade Cannon appeared at the conference, was seated there, and spoke to the assembled delegates, not as a representative of the Communist League, but as a result of the incorrect and unjustifiable maneuver of introducing himself to the conference as a representative of "left-wing workers in New York" and speaking as such a representative. To appear before the workers in this manner—"incognito, under a mask"—was an entirely false concession to the reactionary and pseudoprogressive elements at the conference. This is not the case of a rank-and-file miner, who, in order to retain contact with the masses in a reactionary union, is sometimes obligated to deceive the fakers by denying his membership in the revolutionary organization. It is the case of an outstanding known leader and national secretary of the CLA. The subterfuge was further rendered harmful by the fact that the comrade who one week presents himself in the guise of a representative of "left-wing workers in New York" is present the preceding and succeeding weeks, in the columns of the *Militant* which is read by miners, as the national secretary of the Communist League. The League would be making an enormous error to sanction the tactic of its leading representatives, its formal, known spokesmen, acting among the miners under some "innocuous" banner, in the name of a "harmless" group, by means of anonymity—and, what inevitably accompanies such a tactic, to speak without distinguishing our position from that of the reformists and the confusionists in the

PMA leadership, without conveying to the delegates and workers our critical attitude toward them.

A criticism of the leadership and the policies of the PMA, at least such a criticism as could and should have been made at the conference, was not delivered by our representative, as we gather from the report in the *Militant* and the *Progressive Miner*. Our criticism of the original plan to "form a new federation of labor" was of secondary importance, for this plan was far from the worst of the mistakes made in the past and being made now by the PMA leadership. As it is now, in the eyes of the Communist workers on the one hand and of the Illinois miners on the other, the Communist League of America has no position different from that of the union's leadership, or more accurately, our position is not in any way as clearly disassociated from the Percy-Keck position as the whole situation and our task demand. It is necessary to understand and establish the nature of the Gillespie conference and the part we played in it so that a similar error shall not be repeated in the future, so that our miner-comrades shall be clearly oriented in their work, so that the organizers we are sending now and in the future into the Illinois field shall conduct themselves on the basis of past experiences and the necessary corrections in our policy.

9. Beginning immediately, before the interests of the League (and consequently of the progressive miners' movement) are further harmed, we must take a clear and unambiguous stand in the *Militant* especially toward the whole question of our relations with the PMA and the various tendencies within it. However belatedly, we must begin with a flat-footed—not hostile, but honest and open—criticism of the course the PMA is now being compelled to follow by its leadership and the dangers confronting the movement. If our influence in this movement is still at a very low point, at its inception as a matter of fact, the way to increase it is the one outlined in the preceding paragraphs. Above all, it is necessary to make our position clear to our own members of the League in such a manner that no room is left for unclarity, ambiguity, or opportunistic errors. Toward this end, it is necessary not only to utilize the columns of the *Militant* for articles written with the *Militant* "reading public" in mind, not only to utilize the presence of comrade Oehler in the coalfields, but also to send out the present statement of policy for the information and discussion of the League members.

Statement on the Dispute over the Red Army and the German Situation

by Max Shachtman

12 March 1933

This statement was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 10 (18 March 1933).

On March 1 Cannon submitted his "Resolution on the Red Army and the German Revolution" to the resident committee. Noting that Shachtman's February 24 motion was "a capitulatory retreat before the pogrom agitation of the Stalinists around this question," Cannon insisted:

The Red Army exists to defend the conquests of the October revolution and to aid in extending this revolution to other countries. The Red Army is not only the arm of the Soviet Union as it exists at the present time within the territorial limits of old Russia (and not even the whole of that), but it is in the fullest sense of the word the arm of the international proletariat.[...]

The agitation of the American Stalinists to the effect that "the Red Army is international in the sense that the workers of other countries will eventually join it"; of Wicks, that the German workers must complete their own revolution and organize their own Red Army without the direct aid of the existing Red Army of the Soviet Union, and that the elucidation of the true international role of the Red Army by the Left Opposition is "provocation for a war on the Soviet Union"—in all this agitation of the Stalinists there are contained the most reactionary national socialist conceptions and an ideological preparation to sanction a colossal betrayal. The spirit of this agitation is, in essence, the spirit of August 4, 1914. This the Left Opposition must say out loud.¹¹²

Shachtman voted against Cannon's motion to adopt the resolution as "the guiding line of our policy in the Militant and on the platform." Cannon's resolution was also published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 10.

The motion by comrade Cannon on "The Red Army and the German Revolution" demands an unambiguous and blunt reply. The whole dispute is presented by him in a deliberately falsified light, and an objective discussion of it is recklessly perverted for the factional ends of his group. This is not the first time Cannon

has practiced this method in our internal disputes; this time, however, he has exceeded all possibly legitimate boundaries.

Some Facts

My original motion on the question is characterized as if it were forced upon me by semi-Stalinist elements in the League (who are they?) for the purpose of "manufacturing" political differences with the National Committee majority. Exactly the contrary is the case. So that the precise nature of the dispute and the manner in which it arose may be known, it is necessary to establish the following facts.

At our first meeting on the German situation in the Stuyvesant Casino, comrade Cannon in his speech raised the slogan of mobilizing the Red Army to intervene in Germany. This is not a "Stalinist lie" but a simple statement of fact. "Hitler's knife is poised over the body of the German proletariat"—I quote directly from Cannon's speech—"The Red Army must shoot the knife out of the hands of fascism." This was no mere rhetorical flourish. Everyone in the audience understood it in just that sense. The numerous questions that were asked from the floor, orally and in writing, showed that this is how everybody understood Cannon's slogan. Nor did Cannon seek to rectify any "misunderstanding" when workers in the audience protested against the demand to send the Red Army into Germany under present circumstances. Shachtman, in replying to the questions from the floor, was obviously unable to separate himself openly from Cannon's position, and consequently confined his remarks to an explanation of the principled Communist position on the international role of the Red Army, illustrating our stand by reference to the events in Poland in 1920 and in Georgia in 1921. Unfortunately the damage had already been done and it was obvious that the workers present did not perceive a distinction between the two presentations.

Had the matter rested there, it would have remained an incident without much repercussion. I did not take up the matter officially, although any number of our League members requested that I bring up the question in the National Committee. At the German meeting in Brooklyn, however, Cannon repeated the same false slogan in somewhat different terms, but no less unmistakable in purport.

The impression immediately made the rounds of the Commu-

nist and sympathizing workers that this was the viewpoint of the Left Opposition. Wicks (with whose view I will deal further on) at the Bronx meeting exploited this irresponsible blunder of Cannon to the maximum, seeking to whip up a lynching spirit against the Oppositionists present, whose arguments for the united-front policy he found it impossible to meet. Among the Communist workers—both among followers of the Stalin faction and the Lovestone faction—the discussion of our viewpoint (in New York, of course) immediately turned away from our main standpoint (united front) to a discussion of the slogan raised by Cannon, on which score our opponents naturally took the offensive.

It thus became imperative that the matter be brought up formally in the National Committee. Far from seeking to make a factional issue of the matter I was concerned with the League and its leading representatives adopting a correct position *without making the question a subject for factional dispute*. It was in this spirit that I discussed the matter not only with comrades directly associated with me in the internal League dispute, but with a number of comrades who are not associated with either of the factions. It is a demonstrable fact that I wrote my original motion after consultation with the latter; it was they who suggested that I write the motion in that manner, without making a criticism of Cannon, without even mentioning his name, without referring directly to the mass meetings or the fact that Cannon raised the slogan in the manner mentioned above. I readily agreed with this suggestion. My main concern was not with an attack upon Cannon, but with settling the question correctly and without factional bickering.

Cannon's reply to this effort can be read in his document. When my motion was introduced into the committee, Cannon opposed its adoption. Later he presented—not a countermotion, but an article for the *Militant*, filled with ambiguous formulations, deliberate evasions of the only real issue involved, and factional attacks upon his opponents in the League (myself in particular) made in the now customary form of innuendo and insinuation. I voted against the article and demanded that before any article on the disputed point is printed in the official organ of the League, the National Committee should first adopt an official position—an opposite procedure being false from beginning to end. The official position proposed by Cannon was presented by him at a later meeting in the form of the motion referred to above.

This motion is not meant, so to say, for "New York consumption," but exclusively for the record and for the branches outside of New York. For while there is of course no stenographic record, the New York comrades—and the hundreds of other workers who attended the mass meetings—know only too well what Cannon really said and advocated in his speeches. They can and will designate his present denial of his own slogan as nothing but a *falsehood*. That this denial is made amid a barrage of fire against me will not suffice—at least not in New York—to cover up the incontestable facts.

"In his journalistic (ahem!) comments in the *Militant*," writes Cannon, who does not make any sort of comment in the *Militant*, "comrade Shachtman has not devoted a single word to the slander of the Stalinists, has not answered it, has not called it slander." Shachtman's motion, continues Cannon, "is not an answer to this slander. It is a supplement to it." This "slander," i.e., the charge that Cannon advocated in his speeches the immediate Red Army intervention in Germany, was first made at the Stuyvesant Casino meeting on February 5 by workers present who challenged Cannon's exposition on this point. Cannon did not call it a slander then, nor did he think it necessary to point out to these workers that this was not really his position. When Wicks repeated it at the Bronx meeting two weeks later on February 19, Cannon did not consider it a slander either. He never once proposed to me or anyone else that the *Militant* should repudiate Wicks' charge as a perversion of our point of view. He never once proposed, did not even mention, that he would write anything in the *Militant* so that his actual position and the actual position of the International Left Opposition might be clearly stated. Cannon presented his article on the Red Army for *Militant* publication only at the National Committee meeting of February 24, that is, *only after I had introduced my motion on policy*, which evidently caused comrade Cannon to reflect on the untenability of his previous position.

But instead of making a simple acknowledgment of the error, he merely denies the whole thing and seeks to cover it up with a violent factional assault upon me. We have always attacked the Stalinist leadership for its repugnant method of "self-criticism," which consists in ascribing to others the mistakes which it itself has made, or in covering up its own mistakes by bald denials that they were made or by concocting "mistakes" on the part of its

opponents or critics. In the present dispute, there is no distinguishable difference between the method we attack and the method employed by comrade Cannon.

But you are capitulating to the Stalinist pogrom agitation against the Opposition? Not in the least. The best way to meet such an agitation is to present our position correctly and not falsely, so that we force the Stalinists to attack us for what we really advocate. That they do not like to do, because it cannot be done successfully. The argument about "capitulation" and "retreat" is simply flag-waving in a demagogic appeal to sentiment. When Urbahns demanded the "return of the Chinese Eastern Railway" to Chiang Kai-shek, the Stalinists launched a violent campaign against him and the whole Left Opposition. Their agitation against Urbahns' utterly false position (like the Wicksian agitation against us now) had a distinctly reactionary and national-Bolshevik flavor in many respects. This did not prevent Trotsky and the ILO from condemning Urbahns and eventually breaking from him. We did not then "capitulate" to the Stalinist agitation, as Urbahns accused us at that time! And we did dissociate ourselves from the Stalinists at the same time. The real capitulator at that time was Urbahns, and his capitulation was in the direction of Korschist ultraleftism. When the right wing in the French Opposition was capitulating to its "allies" in the Opposition Unitaire, Trotsky did not hesitate to distinguish himself from the former, even though it was under attack by the Stalinists (who attacked it from the Stalinist, i.e., the false, standpoint).

In the present case, the Stalinists and Lovestoneites have launched an attack upon the Opposition in the same way: *Their* attack upon Cannon's position has a distinctly nationalist and treacherous connotation; *they* utilize Cannon's false slogans in order to cover up their own reactionary position. Cannon, on the other hand, tries to cover up his own error and to make factional capital against us by bracketing me and several unnamed others with Wicks and the Stalinist pogrom agitation to which I am "capitulating." But it is precisely in order to arm our comrades against Wicks and co. that I proposed to settle the question by my motion, aimed to end the confusion in Cannon's presentation and the consequent confusion on the subject which he has helped to create among our own comrades as well.

Even this stratagem might be contemptuously overlooked were

it not for the fact that Cannon's motion on policy does not yet make matters clear.

What is the dispute about? The only *genuine* point at issue has already been indicated above. To evade this point, Cannon "finds" a point of "principled" dispute. As this does not exist, so far as I am concerned, Cannon is merely creating straw men to knock down, is merely rushing violently through open doors. Toward the beginning of his motion, Cannon grudgingly acknowledges that I recognize the truly international role of the Red Army, its "defensive" as well as "offensive" role. I do it, of course, "apologetically," "negatively," "defensively"; comrade Cannon, being more radical, does it fearlessly, positively, and aggressively. But toward the end of his document, carried away by his own flourishes, he charges me with a "gross perversion of principle."

To my mind there is only one perversion of principle conceivable in this question: the assignment of a purely defensive role to the Red Army. Such a perversion is really practiced by the Stalinists, who assign to the Red Army and to an ever increasing extent to the whole Communist International the role of defending the frontiers of the Soviet Union, neither more nor less; this practice flows from their fundamental theory of socialism in one country. If I share this standpoint to any degree, then there is little room indeed left for me in the Opposition. Fortunately, matters are not so bad. My reply to the questions from the floor at the Stuyvesant Casino meeting was heard by everybody; I spoke at length on the fundamental principles involved in the Polish offensive and in the Red Army's activities in the Georgian revolution. Comrade Cannon's expositions do not "convince" me for the simple reason that I was convinced quite a while ago that the Soviet Union and its Red Army have not only a "defensive" but also an "offensive" role to play. Together with many others I also learned in the Marxian primers that 1. "Only a traitor can reject the offensive in principle"; and 2. "Only a blockhead, however, can confine all strategy to the offensive." Because I take such ideas for granted, in our ranks at any rate, I do not find it necessary to present a lengthy argumentation in favor of them when I present a motion to the National Committee; I confine myself, as I did in the present case, to a reference to the Polish and Georgian cases. Comrade Cannon's annoyance with my point of view does not arise out of the fact that I fail to recognize the "offensive" role of

the Red Army as well, or that I recognize it "apologetically." It arises out of the fact that I recognize it so unmistakably that it does not fit into his factional constructions against me and compels him to resort for an argument to worked-up protests against a supposed "apologetic" formulation.

Is there a distinction between the "defensive" and the "offensive"? In the fundamental sense which was attributed to the distinction during the World War by each of the imperialist powers and their respective social patriots to justify the "defense of the fatherland," it does not exist. Is there a distinction in the case under consideration? Of course there is, even though not a fundamental one.

What is required at the present moment, especially in the ranks of the Opposition, is not banalities and extensive disquisitions on the fact that the Red Army cannot be excluded from participating in the world revolution, that it is not to be confined to a defensive role only. No. What is required is a clear and unambiguous presentation of the task of the Red Army *now*, at the present conjuncture of events. In his motion, comrade Cannon still fails to give a correct presentation, because what he says is ambiguous, vague, rhetorical, and he reveals that he has not yet completely given up the false position which he now denies having advanced.

For the Red Army to remain passive (he writes) while the German working class is crushed under the heel of fascism, its organizations annihilated and its capacity for resistance destroyed for a number of years, would not only create the conditions for a world imperialist assault against the Soviet Union led by German fascism and endanger the existence of the former. It would also signify in no smaller degree a colossal betrayal of the German and consequently of the whole international proletariat on the part of the whole Stalinist leadership. For the Left Opposition to keep silent in the face of a policy that leads objectively in this direction, for it to retreat to a presentation of the question from the point of view simply of the *self-defense* of the present Soviet Union, would be to make itself a party to this historical betrayal.

And just what is the Red Army to do while "the German working class is crushed under the heel of fascism"? That is, what is it to do if—assuming the worst variant—the German working class "remains passive," if it fails to organize its resistance in time, if it continues as at present without having organized even a serious national *defensive* movement, much less an offensive against fascism? The Opposition counts, of course, upon arousing the

Communists and the proletariat in good time; it goes without saying that we have not drawn a “finis” line under the struggle in Germany. But to ask the above question is enough to show how equivocal and therefore dangerous is comrade Cannon’s formulation.

Again: In his article for the *Militant*, Cannon pleasantly insinuates an identity between my position and that of the social democracy during the World War. They were “also” for “internationalism in principle”; but when the question became “concrete and specific,” they betrayed. In his motion he continues: “It is not now a problem of the right and duty of the Red Army to be ready to ‘carry out revolutionary tasks’ in some indefinite place beyond the ‘frontiers’ of the present Soviet Republic. The place is Germany. And the question is: the revolutionary tasks of the Red Army in the German revolution.” What is the only possible meaning of the shoddy comparison? If it has any meaning, it is this: Shachtman, like the social democrats, is quite ready to acknowledge internationalism “in principle”; he is ready to give the Red Army the right and duty to intervene beyond the “frontiers” of the present Soviet Union—“in principle”; but now, when “the place is Germany,” when the “question is concrete and specific,” Shachtman...capitulates to Stalinist national Bolshevism. The cloven hoof of the position which Cannon denies he ever held sticks right out of this argument.

Finally: The essence of comrade Trotsky’s warnings, writes Cannon, is “that the Soviet Union *must not wait* until the fascists ‘are marching on the Soviets’ but must strike them down before they are ready. The ‘self-defense’ of the Soviet Union in this case merges completely into the *offensive struggle against German fascism* and the *defense of the German revolution*.” This is *not*, to our mind, the essence of comrade Trotsky’s warnings. The advice that the Red Army be mobilized as soon as the fascists take power I construe as follows: We must not wait for the mobilization, the preparation, the arousing of the Soviet Union and its Red Army until the fascists have completed their preparations for the attack, supported and urged on by French and international imperialism. This preparation and mobilization must take place before then, as a “matter of revolutionary self-defense in a most direct and immediate sense.” To sound the alarm now, to mobilize the Red Army now for the defense of the Soviet Union, is precisely the way of preventing the fascists from “drawling this martial air,” of forcing them “to sing it staccato.” If war is inevitable—and if fascism wins, it is

inevitable—the mobilization of the Red Army now will make it possible for the Soviets to conduct the war of defense under conditions unfavorable to fascism which will not yet have had the opportunity of suppressing the enemy at home, i.e., the proletarian movement.

Comrade Cannon construes the warning to mean that the Red Army “must strike them down (the fascists) before they are ready.” This, too, if it has a serious significance, can only mean an immediate military attack (now or within the very next period) upon Hitlerite Germany as well as upon Pilsudski’s Poland, which lies between the two and which, apparently, is a trifle that does not enter into comrade Cannon’s calculations. As for the “defense of the German revolution,” the tragedy lies precisely in the fact that this revolution has not yet even begun, and the last way to begin it is that which is implicit in Cannon’s exposition.

Does this mean that the Red Army, after all, has no offensive role to play? Quite the contrary. Comrade Cannon juggles with phrases about the defense of Russia, offensive against Hitler, defense of the German revolution. Let us put it precisely. The Russo-Polish war of 1920 was forced upon the Soviets by the Pilsudski *offensive*; for the Soviets, it was a war of *self-defense*. In the course of this defensive war and *as a part of it* (plus the fact that the vitality of the Red Army and the maturity of the Polish proletariat were overestimated by Lenin and the Bolsheviks), it was converted into an offensive war against Pilsudski. Leaving aside the false tactical estimations of the Bolsheviks, the Polish events were a demonstration of how the Red Army did and should fulfill its revolutionary internationalist role of defending the socialist fatherland and extending the proletarian revolution by coming to the assistance of the insurrectionary working class in other lands.

If the present question is concrete and specific—and it certainly is—the task of the Red Army must be put concretely and specifically. Generalities about “time” and “place” and “relations of forces” do not suffice. It is necessary to point out what the “relation of forces” actually *is* at the *present* time and in the *given* place. This is left entirely vague by comrade Cannon. Just what role the Red Army can play, specifically and not “in principle,” must be stated clearly and unequivocally; but it is not done by comrade Cannon. It must be done in order to eliminate the confusion created. We must point out, in addition to the above-outlined, that which the Bolsheviks a

decade ago explained so clearly in connection with the Georgian revolution. (Merely to repeat here what I said in my motion, i.e., my entire agreement with the quotation from comrade Trotsky which follows, would suffice by itself, if more were needed, to give the deserved answer to “gross perversion of principle” which Cannon has discovered in my views.)

The crux of the matter (wrote Trotsky over ten years ago) consists in the fact that the Soviet revolution in Georgia (which was indeed brought about with the active participation of the Red Army, for we would have betrayed the workers and peasants of Georgia if we had not assisted them by our armed forces, since we had such), took place after the experiment of three years of Georgian “independence” and under conditions which guaranteed not merely a temporary military success, but also further political development for the revolution—that is, the extension and strengthening of the Soviet system in Georgia itself. And in this (if the thickheaded pedants of democracy will allow me to say so) our revolutionary task consists. The politicians of the Second International in unison with their mentors from their bourgeois diplomatic chancelleries smile sardonically at our recognition of the rights of national self-determination. This they designate as a trap for simpletons—a bait held out by Russian imperialism. In reality it is history itself which is holding out these baits, instead of settling the questions in a straightforward way. In any case we cannot be accused of turning the zigzags of historical development into traps, for, while actually recognizing the right of national self-determination, we take care to explain to the masses its limited historical significance and we never put it above the interests of the proletarian revolution. A workers state, in recognizing the right of self-determination, thereby recognizes that revolutionary coercion is not an all-powerful historical factor. Soviet Russia does not by any means intend to make its military power take the place of the revolutionary efforts of the proletariats of other countries. The conquest of proletarian power must be an outcome of proletarian political experience. This does not mean that the revolutionary efforts of the workers of Georgia or any other country must not receive any military support from outside. It is only essential that this support should come at a moment when the need for it has been created by the political development of the workers and recognized by the class-conscious revolutionary vanguard, who have won the sympathy of the majority of the workers. These are questions of revolutionary strategy and not a formal democratic ritual.⁴⁴³

If comrade Cannon has a point of view “different from that of comrade Shachtman” and “against it”—it is against the conclusions which the Bolsheviki drew from the Polish and Georgian events that he will have to counterpose it.

This is not the place to deal with the factional "appendix" which Cannon attaches to his argumentation on the Red Army. Its content will be dealt with at the proper time and in the proper place. The slanders and falsehoods against the National Committee minority which Cannon always injects into a disputed question (and he does it invariably by first raising the hue and cry about our "poisonous" methods) will be answered in full on a more fitting occasion. We will not permit this discussion, however, to be deliberately muddled up and befogged by extraneous questions, which are calculated to distract attention from the retreat on the disputed question which Cannon has been compelled to make. However, since the "appendix" is what he is principally concerned with (it is clear that all which precedes it serves merely as a preface to the factional attack), it is necessary to make the following observations:

1. Cannon does not "poison the atmosphere" of the internal discussion in the League. Far from it. He only designates anonymous individuals or groups of individuals as semi-Stalinists. What are their names and addresses, so that the League may know who they are and be able to combat them properly instead of in the dark? Cannon, who fights in the open, is holding that "information" in reserve.

2. Cannon, who does not "hunt for deviations," has quite recently discovered a capitulationist tendency in the League. To be exact, the discovery dates back one month; the incentive to the discovery does not originate here, but to be exact again, in Germany. When the German Opposition was fighting Landau, Cannon discovered Landauism in the American League. When the French Opposition was engaged in a struggle with Naville, Cannon discovered (among the same comrades) Navillism in the American League. As soon as the news arrived of the Well capitulation in Germany, Cannon proceeded to discover (again among the same comrades) Wellism or capitulationism in the American League. For one brief week, these same comrades were accused of "Lacroixism" because they advocated the issuance of an internal organizational bulletin by the New York branch. Tomorrow it will be something else—all in the interests of the "international education" of the League. Comrade Cannon's method is: any stick to beat a dog.

3. In his "appendix" Cannon develops this idea or, rather, this threat: The minority, starting out "without political differences" with his faction, is now trying to manufacture them in order to

have a "different platform." Translated more clearly, this means: Regardless of the position taken from now on by comrade Cannon on this or that question, the minority will be charged with the unprincipled manufacturing of differences if it presumes to challenge the correctness of Cannon's stand; it will be charged with Stalinism, semi-Stalinism, capitulation to Stalinism, etc. In politics this is commonly known as political blackmail. We will be all the less deterred by this threat when we take a position on any given question, because of the meaning of the threat.

4. The violence of the attack Cannon makes upon us in his motion would be perplexing if the fact that there is another disputed question on the agenda did not make it clear. I refer to the dispute on comrade Cannon's policy in Gillespie and in the Illinois mining situation generally. The unusual fierceness of his attack on the "Red Army question" is comprehensible only as a barrage laid down to cover an opportunist position in the "miners' question." The abusive charge of "capitulation to Stalinism" will not, however, serve the purpose required by comrade Cannon. Each question will be put on its own feet and dealt with accordingly.



Note on Shachtman's Statement

by James P. Cannon

Published 18 March 1933

This undated statement was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 10 (18 March 1933).

In his second document comrade Shachtman had the opportunity to correct the false formulations in his motion on policy with regard to the situation in Germany and the role of the Red Army. Instead of doing that, he only succeeded in demonstrating, in his lengthy statement, that his first motion is a real expression of his point of view. By that he convinces me over again that the answer I made in my resolution was the only possible answer.

The statement of comrade Shachtman that, at the meeting at the Stuyvesant Casino on February 5, "Cannon in his speech raised

the slogan of mobilizing the Red Army to intervene immediately in Germany” is a lie invented after the fact or, more correctly, borrowed from the Stalinists after he and others associated with him had felt the full force of the Stalinist pogrom agitation.

Neither Shachtman nor *anyone else* in our ranks ever said or even intimated by one word to me that such a construction could justly be placed on my remarks at the Stuyvesant meeting. Neither Shachtman nor anyone else ever suggested to me at any time that there was any disagreement with my treatment of the question. After the Stuyvesant meeting I spoke again in the same sense at the Bronx meeting on February 12. I repeated it again at the Brooklyn meeting a few days later. The motion of Shachtman introduced at the NC meeting on February 24, nearly three weeks later, was the first *intimation* given to me by anybody that the Stalinist slander had made its way into our ranks. And even then I was not yet informed that the accusation was aimed at me personally. That is why I did not “deny” anything for myself in my resolution, but simply defended the fundamental internationalist standpoint against the Stalinist slanderers and perverters of principle. It was only at the NC meeting of March 1, after I had presented my resolution, that Shachtman for the first time made the direct statement regarding my speech at the Stuyvesant meeting. Therefore I have never “denied” it before, as he maintains in his statement, and I do not “deny” it now. I simply say it is a lie and that it is of a piece with the organized system of lying which has characterized the factional method of Shachtman since the beginning of the internal struggle and by means of which he has sought at every turn to muddle and divert attention from the real issue in dispute.

But the method of lying and then shifting the issue from a political dispute to a question of veracity—a method which we have encountered frequently enough—will not avail here. What is involved in the present instance is a radical difference of viewpoint on a fundamental question. The second statement of Shachtman has not eliminated or modified this difference. This is the real essence of the matter. It is in no way affected by what one says or doesn't say, by what or whom one believes or doesn't believe. Those members of the League who concern themselves with political, principled considerations will understand this and judge the merits of the present dispute accordingly.

PS: The recent alarming information from comrade Trotsky about the internal condition of the Red Army, which directly affects its *capacity* to fulfill its proper role in the present circumstances, places an extraordinary restriction on public utterances on the question. That alone compels me to refrain from publishing my article on the Red Army in the *Militant*. But the fundamental question of the international tasks of the Red Army remains unaffected. From the standpoint of an internationalist the new information about the internal *weakness* of the Red Army—a weakness resulting from the accumulated effects of Stalinist policy—is not a reason to make concessions to the Stalinist conception of its nationally limited *role*. On the contrary it is a reason to oppose it all the more firmly.



Motion on April Gillespie Conference

by James P. Cannon⁴⁴⁴

29 March 1933

*Submitted to the March 29 resident committee meeting, this motion was a compromise after a clash at the previous day's meeting over policy at the second Gillespie Trades and Labor Assembly conference. Having advocated a frontal assault "against the right wing in this movement (and consequently in the PMA) and the pseudoprogressives who really cohabit with the right wing or yield to it without struggle," Shachtman counterposed his own motion to Cannon's point no. III.*⁴⁴⁵

*The motion refers to the urgent defense of the 54 members of the PMA and its women's auxiliary, arrested in early January after a pitched battle with Peabody Coal Company thugs at the Kinkaid mine outside of Taylorville. One member of the women's auxiliary and two strikebreakers were killed, and 18 others wounded. Of the Taylorville strikers 22 were charged with murder and 32 others with unlawful assembly and inciting to riot. The CLA played an active role in defense efforts, including organizing a March 14 united-front meeting in Chicago with the Civil Liberties Union and the ILD.*⁴⁴⁶

I

From a trade-union standpoint, the conference at Gillespie on April 1 will consist basically of units of the PMA plus a few scattered local craft unions in the mining area. The nondescript organizations that may be there in addition will add no serious trade-union weight to the conference. This applies also to the paper local organizations of the TUUL which may be present.

With such a composition there is not the slightest ground for the conference to aim at the creation of a new federation of labor. The attempt can only result in dismal failure and discredit to its initiators. We must resolutely oppose this utopian idea and every tendency to give the conference such a direction. In view of the persistent efforts of some of the official elements in the movement to push toward the formal organization of a new paper federation, it is necessary to take a firmer stand against it and put the conference on record *specifically against such a plan*.

The most the conference could do is to create a center for propaganda and partly also for organizing progressive groups in the unions. But even in this it can play only a limited role. Both the composition and the leadership of the conference preclude the idea that it can become the national organizing center for the left and progressive forces in the labor movement.

Such a formation requires a further development of the left-wing movement which will lead toward the coming-together of the various organization formations and currents for a common struggle. The Gillespie conference can only be regarded as a single factor in this development, but it cannot replace it. This must be frankly stated and explained. The whole idea that a few sectional organizations (in reality only the Progressive Miners), whose stability is yet to be established and with a leadership that has yet to clarify its aims and establish a national prestige, can take over the direction of a national movement by means of a conference is unsound and foredoomed to disastrous failure.

Therefore we are of the opinion that the constitution of a permanent organization at the Gillespie conference would be incorrect. The right thing for a conference to do would be to say openly:

1. That the response to the initiative of the Gillespie Trades and

Labor Council, as indicated by the conference representation, shows that a sufficient basis for the creation of a new federation of labor is lacking and therefore this project is definitely put aside.

2. That the representation at the conference, because of its limited and sectional character, shows that it cannot take upon itself at the present time the formation of a permanent organization. Such an organization of the left and progressive forces on a national scale is a perspective to be aimed at, but it cannot be realized now through the medium of the Gillespie conference. The three conferences at Gillespie have made a contribution to this end. They helped to prepare the ground for an eventual national movement on a broader basis. That is all that can be done at the present time.

3. The conference recommends the program adopted at the January 29 session to the consideration of the workers who are struggling for the regeneration of the labor movement and its liberation from reactionary policies and leadership. It decides on the continuation of a committee to keep in touch with sympathetic trade-union bodies and be ready to act jointly with them in the preparation of a broader conference at some future time when conditions will be more propitious for success.

Our delegates should oppose the formation of a permanent organization, the adoption of a specific name, or the calling of a national conference at this time. Our delegates should point out the necessity of drawing these conclusions and the danger of playing with illusions and paper organizations which do not advance but rather retard their declared aims.

II

On the new wage contract, from such information as we have, it appears to the NC that big concessions have been made to the operators and that the leaders of the union (Percy and Keck) are minimizing these concessions and justifying them with class-collaborationist reasoning. There cannot be any doubt that the *two-year* contract works greatly to the advantage of the operators and will reduce the real wages of the miners when prices rise as a result of an economic upturn, or inflation, or both. The left wing ought to take a sharply critical attitude on this question and warn against every tendency to reconcile the interests of the workers

with the exploiters. If a suitable occasion offers itself in the Gillespie conference, one of our delegates should speak on this theme and point out that a union can be really *progressive* only if it approaches every conflict from the point of view of the class struggle and entertains no illusions about the fact that the employers are class enemies in every case.

In the Gillespie conference our delegates should take occasion to bring out—in a careful, planned way—a distinction between their position and that of the PMA official leadership on the most appropriate concrete questions.

They should bring in a resolution on the Taylorville cases, which refers to the resolution adopted at the January 29 conference. This January 29 resolution called for a class policy in the defense and a program of mass demonstrations. Instead of that the Defense Committee, under pressure of the lawyers, came out for a legalistic policy and dampened down the mass movement. We have to come out openly against this policy, and the dangerous illusions it creates, counterposing to it the class-struggle concept of the nature of capitalist justice and citing the experience of Sacco-Vanzetti, Mooney, etc.

III

If political organizations are admitted to the conference, comrade Oehler should present a credential as fraternal delegate of the League. Since the call for the conference does not provide for this, it will be best if comrade Allard raises the question specifically in the executive committee for a general ruling—not in regard to the League, but in regard to political organizations as such. If the executive committee decides adversely, our steering committee can decide whether to take the general issue to the floor. It would be tactically incorrect to allow this question to become the center of the conflict. It would give the right-wing elements the best chance to carry the conference on formal trade-union grounds. At the same time, they would be in the most advantageous position under the present conditions if they can center their fight on Communism as such rather than on the concrete issues.

Motion on CLA Delegate at Gillespie

by Max Shachtman

29 March 1933

*Shachtman counterposed this motion to point no. III of Cannon's resolution on Gillespie at the March 29 resident committee meeting, which was attended only by Cannon and Shachtman. The minutes noted, "On the point to follow, we send you two motions, one by Cannon and one by Shachtman, which, as is to be seen, represent different shadings and emphasis. Since a matter of tactics alone is involved, we have decided to leave the execution to the steering committee of Allard, Angelo, Glotzer, and Oehler."*⁴⁴⁷

In the executive committee of the conference our comrades shall propose to invite fraternal delegates from labor political organizations to greet the conference, pointing out that they are much closer to the heart and nature of the conference than the "farmers organizations" that were invited. Should this be turned down by the executive committee, our steering committee should bring in the proposal as a minority report, without allowing themselves to be maneuvered into a position where this becomes the central issue of dispute at the conference. Should it be adopted, comrade Oehler should submit a credential from the CLA and greet the conference in its name, pointing out our position as outlined in the motions adopted by the NC and giving a lead for the crystallization of the left-wing and progressive elements away from the right-wing and job-selling elements.

III.

The International Intervenes

Resolution on the Situation in the American Section

International Preconference of the ILO

4–8 February 1933

The International Preconference in Paris, 4–8 February 1933, passed this motion after hearing Arne Swabeck's lengthy report on political and economic developments in the United States and the internal crisis of the American League.⁴⁴⁸ The resolution was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 11 (31 March 1933) with Swabeck's report on the pre-conference. While the resolution takes no position on the CLA fight, Swabeck reported to Cannon from Paris, "The leading comrades here are, however, definitely decided on our conflict and will propose a definite position openly and formally in support of the majority as soon as the material giving both views is published. As a matter of fact they were quite definitely decided before I arrived from their own perusal of the material available then."⁴⁴⁹ Swabeck left Paris for Prinkipo in mid-February, traveling through Germany at the request of the I.S.

I. The preconference, after hearing the report of the American delegate and of the I.S., declares that the American League has during the most recent period made substantial progress (increased number of members, creation of new local branches in Pittsburgh, etc., political activity in connection with the Amsterdam Congress, German question, unemployed movement, Illinois miners).

II. It approves the decisions of the leadership of the League for a better organization of forces, for the establishment of responsible and collective work, for more energetic and closer participation in the movements of the working masses. The preconference regards these measures as the best means for the selection and training of cadres.

III. Under these conditions, it regards it as wholly indispensable that the League should supply adequate information as to the internal conflict as soon as possible, so that the sections can

express themselves. Since both sides have maintained hitherto that there are no serious differences of opinion as to the policies of the League in the class struggle and that this internal struggle is harmful to the development of the organization, the preconference has decided:

- a. The I.S. is to call upon both sides to prepare a document as to the differences of opinion for the *International Bulletin*.
- b. The leadership of the American League is to prepare for its next conference, at which the question of the internal question is also to be brought up, after a discussion in which the entire membership of the organization and the sections of the ILO are to take part.



The International Must Apply the Brakes

Transcript of a Discussion Between
Leon Trotsky and Arne Swabeck⁴⁵⁰

27 February 1933

Comrade Swabeck: We can now most certainly expect a much more rapid development in terms of the intensified contradictions within American imperialism and its role as a world power, as well as intensified class struggle, and this in the near future. This means a broad perspective for us. We assume that the role of workers organizations in America will expand greatly in significance in the future. As this happens, the great problems of the trade-union movement will be posed, along with the theoretical questions on the trade unions and the class struggle in general. Naturally this does not exclude a certain development of reformism as well. To date, the reformist parties have grown more than the Communist. The most likely scenario seems to be that developments will intensify so rapidly that social reformism might not be able to keep up. This gives the CP big opportunities. Today, the social democracy, the Communist Party, and the trade unions are still small. The CP is just as bad or even worse than the other Communist parties and today counts at most 8,000 members. Of course, the

Left Opposition also confronts major problems, particularly with such a small Communist Party in such a large country. However, I believe that we have already taken several measures to prepare the Left Opposition for the coming developments.

In the initial period our organization grew rapidly, and then growth came to a standstill until about the end of 1930. At the beginning of 1931 we built our center and an apparatus; we numbered about 100 members at the time. At the time of our second conference the organization had grown to about 150 members, and today we have about 210 to 212. All in all, this shows that we have indeed made a certain amount of progress. We had the advantage that the central core was a homogeneous group sharing the same views, and was that way when it was expelled from the Party. There were no differences regarding platform, theses, or the class struggle in general. Of course, there were minor differences of opinion. At the beginning of 1931 we adopted an Expansion Program, which was primarily a propagandist program stipulating, among other things, that the *Militant* would again appear as a weekly. During this period elements came over to us who otherwise might not have done so; they came primarily for literary reasons—of course, not all of them. On the basis of this program we began to undertake organizational steps primarily in the direction of expanding and consolidating the membership. In general our influence is greater than our organizational growth. Today we do not have the right kind of contact with the Party, primarily because the Party is conducting an extraordinarily sharp struggle against the Left Opposition. It expels members, for example, even for attending our public meetings. Nevertheless we have sometimes been able to determine that we have influence on Party members—e.g., on the question of our campaign on the situation in Germany, on the attempts of the Party bureaucrats to tar us as murderers, and on the antiwar question.⁴⁵¹ Our inadequate contact with the Party is a weakness. It is our opinion that to date we have gone through a period of propagandist work and that we must now participate more directly in the class struggle. This does not mean a turn but rather a further step along our road.

We are united in questions of principle. The differences result only from working these problems out. One of the most important problems is creating cadre who can exercise judgment on all questions.

The entire organization must be oriented in international questions and be able to take a position. We have differed particularly with comrade Shachtman's methods for a long time. He viewed everything as a personal question; he often showed us only a small part of letters and defended this by saying that the letters were "personal." That is why the League up to now was always very slow in international questions and why our international contact was too weak. Comrade Glotzer's attitude is similar to that of comrade Shachtman. He came back to America and made a statement distancing himself sharply from the views of comrade Shachtman. Now he has united with comrade Shachtman to combat the majority, declaring that at the time he only differed with comrade Shachtman's international views.

The internal situation has become more and more exacerbated. Comrade Carter published several articles on Engels' views. We considered these articles to be wrong and dangerous because they were a defense of social-democratic views. This difference provided the impetus for a further exacerbation of the internal situation but was not, to be sure, the reason for it. The Carter group is an independent grouping, but it has ties to comrade Shachtman.

At the last plenum we adopted the resolutions unanimously—including the resolution on the international question, which the minority initially opposed as being quite wrong. The resolution on the Carter question, which condemned the views and methods of the Carter group, was also adopted unanimously. After the plenum, however, the struggle continued and intensified.

The National Committee has nine members; five of these constitute the majority, three the minority, and one generally supports the minority (Spector). The New York resident committee has five members, but there the minority is in the majority. At the plenum we proposed that the New York resident committee either be reorganized, or that one or two representatives of the majority be co-opted onto it. The minority agreed to this, and a resolution to this effect was adopted. A later statement by the minority, however, reopened this question. Today they attempt to disavow the wrong position that Shachtman had on the European questions. The minority opposed sending an official representative of the League to the preconference, just as it opposed the preconference altogether.

The minority has begun unprincipled campaigns in various branches—in New York, Chicago, and Boston—and has also had resolutions adopted against the majority.

The differences are not over questions of principle but above all over the question: What conception do we have of a communist organization? What methods should we apply? The Left Opposition cannot always remain a literary circle. I do not want to assert that this is what the minority wants, but in practice that is what their attitude amounts to. More participation in the class struggle or more literary work? We demand of every member greater responsibility and greater capacity to sacrifice; we are against personal combinations.

At the plenum a resolution was adopted unanimously against Carter and his tendency was condemned as scholastic.

Comrade Trotsky: This group is not represented on the central committee?

Comrade Swabek: No, only in the youth organization. There it has the majority; however, it was not elected but appointed by the National Committee.

After the plenum the entire Carter group did not vote on the international resolution. They demanded more information. We believed that this position ought to have brought the minority closer to us. In New York we proposed the election of a new executive committee because Carter is the dominant factor there. We offered the minority a united front against this, but they refused and formed a combination against us.

Despite the fact that the minority had agreed with us at the plenum on the question of co-optation in New York and had agreed not to oppose it, they then in fact went with the Carter group against us on this question. Co-optation, however, was a vital necessity. We felt it necessary to change the social basis of the New York group, which is not sufficiently proletarian. In a factional situation this condition complicates and exacerbates matters. We proposed that for six months, only workers would be accepted as members and that others would be regarded as sympathizers until the social basis of the group changed. In addition, every member would have been required to engage in active work in a mass organization and to report on this work. This resolution was sharply opposed by the Shachtman-Carter combination, particularly the

first point, and was finally rejected by the New York local organization. We hold this position for the entire organization as well.

On the occasion of the trip to Copenhagen and at the onset of the campaign of Stalinist incitement, the minority proposed that a forum be held on this topic. Shachtman and Eastman were to speak. We had nothing against this forum, but considered it out of the question to designate Eastman as a speaker. We had very sharp fights over this question in three meetings and finally had to pose the question of discipline.¹⁵² The forum did not take place.

Comrade Trotsky: Was the fight over the forum or over Eastman?

Comrade Swabeck: Over Eastman.

In Boston we have a group of seven people; four of them came over to us in 1928 from the CP. The comrades have always disagreed with us on the trade-union question, from the beginning to this day. They have a kind of tailist policy vis-à-vis the Stalinist "Third Period." In the National Committee we agree on the trade-union question by and large. We have always fought with the Boston comrades, written them long letters, etc. In some cases they have even refused to carry out decisions. On the question of co-optation, the international questions, and the question of an international delegate, the Boston group was connected with the minority.

Since about April or May 1932 the minority has been working as an organized faction, with its own center, its own finances, etc. At that time we took no measures whatsoever against this. However, building such a faction means the first step toward a split. We didn't call together the comrades who agree with us until a few months ago, not before. We have no particular objections to a faction with a *political* program; but on no political question are there differences of opinion and on no question has the minority raised a particular platform. They even admit that themselves. In this sense the factionalizing continues to be unprincipled and very dangerous for the League. On such a basis no discipline can develop and also no authority for the leadership.

In the initial period the League's strength consisted in the fact that there was a united leadership. That has changed since April 1932, and now this seriously diminishes the authority of the leadership. There are enough examples of this.

When Weisbord returned to America he did not get in touch

with us, nor did he write us. He only informed us that he was holding a public forum where he would speak on the question of his visit with Trotsky. We were invited and, if we liked, a representative of ours could speak. We did not agree with this at all and rejected the proposal out of hand. Some elements were conciliatory to Weisbord in the New York local organization. We decided not to take part in the forum and that our comrades should also not attend, with the exception of one or two observers. Some comrades of the conciliatory tendency declared that they didn't care—there were four or five; in the end only two went—one who did not know about the decision and one who stated openly that he did not care one wit about the motion. In this case as well, we did not propose any measures. But when the case was raised and criticized, the minority and the Carter group formed a combination against the National Committee and also passed a resolution against the National Committee.

Comrade Trotsky: The minority voted in the local organization against the National Committee?

Comrade Swabeck: They did not vote for it (for the resolution) but spoke for it; particularly Shachtman, but also Abern and Glotzer. In the subsequent elections the comrade who had gone to the Weisbord meeting was nonetheless elected on the minority slate to the local executive committee. He has only been in the League six months. Of the eleven members of the local leadership in New York, two support the majority; and this leadership was elected on the basis of a declaration by comrade Shachtman. He would like to have a local leadership that is against the National Committee. This is another example of an unprincipled combination; in this instance, too, we had proposed joining forces with the minority against the Carter group.

When I left I proposed that comrade Cannon be designated as national secretary in my place. The minority strongly opposed this.

Comrade Trotsky: Whom did the minority suggest?

Comrade Swabeck: First, they counterposed the question of finances to this proposal. Second, they said that comrade Cannon had not fulfilled all his duties in the past. (For two and a half years he did not work for the organization. He was in such dire economic straits that he took a job.) Third, they proposed a secretariat of

two comrades (Cannon and Abern) who were supposed to work on an unpaid, volunteer basis.

The wage issue was never a serious one. But we consider two secretaries to be impossible, particularly coming from two different factions as Cannon and Abern do.

Both factions differ in their views of concepts and methods—particularly now, when measures must be taken to strengthen our direct participation in the class struggle. The personal combinations of the minority are very dangerous. If nothing changes here, there must be a split. There is no other way.

We asked the minority whether they also wanted to be represented in Europe and at the preconference. They demand that we quickly convene the third conference. We have nothing against that. But we would like to have enough time to discuss all questions carefully: How can we better carry out our new measures; what is the situation in America; what is the world situation; how are we to orient ourselves correctly?

Comrade Trotsky: What is the composition of the editorial board?

Comrade Swabeck: It has five comrades: Cannon, Shachtman, Abern, Spector, Swabeck.

Comrade Trotsky: Where does the power of decision lie, with the editor or the commission?

Comrade Swabeck: The commission, but collective work with Shachtman is almost impossible; he keeps comrades waiting for a long time and edits the paper in much too individualistic a fashion.

The date of the third conference has already been set for the end of June/beginning of July. It is possible that this will provide enough time, but we have to have new theses because the old ones are no longer adequate. The three years of crisis and the intensification of the class struggle must be dealt with in a fundamental way. The main thing is to have enough time for the international organization to participate fully in the discussion. We would like the help of the international sections and their advice, particularly in our present situation. If the minority does not change its methods, there is no recourse but a split. Playing with principled questions cannot be tolerated, particularly in such a young organization as the League.

Comrade Trotsky: It is not clear what is at issue here. I have only

been able to determine that the majority of the central committee consists of comrades who are, so to speak, more American—i.e., they are older comrades who were already in revolutionary organizations before the CP was founded, in the IWW, whereas the leaders of the minority are younger comrades who have not worked in the trade unions and in revolutionary organizations. The other thing is that in the local organizations, according to comrade Swabek's information, the workers, particularly those with trade-union experience, go more with the majority, whereas the intellectuals, etc., who came over to the organization more or less on ideological grounds, go with the minority. This categorization is not quite exact, but it is by and large correct. This categorization is important insofar as it corresponds to the facts, because there are certain social points of support. The fact that the organization was more active in propagandistic work can explain why these differences or divergences, which are based on the social composition of the organization, have not yet broken through to the surface. Up to now both groups have been preoccupied with the correct propagandistic formulations, but because the different composition of the two groups and the different traditions—or the lack of tradition in the case of one group—do not yet find political expression, they are searching for detours, so to speak, in organizational-personal questions, etc. That is the most dangerous thing. The mere fact that both factions have a different social composition and different traditions is not enough to necessitate a split, since every party arises from various groups, elements, etc., is not socially homogeneous, and is a melting pot. But there must be active work. In the League the current situation coincides with the beginning of more energetic external work. Whether the League will become a melting pot through this work—that is the question that counts. This also depends to a certain degree on opportunities and successes; if there are successes, the best elements will be welded together. If there are failures and development proceeds at a crawl, discontent can find expression in a split.

Why did so few members participate in the voting for the plenum resolution on the question of co-optation?

Comrade Swabek: At the plenum all resolutions were adopted unanimously, and thus the question arose: "You voted for everything unanimously, so why the co-optations?" We proposed the co-optations, however, because we knew how serious the situation

remains despite the unanimity. We had to keep an eye on what the minority was up to and thus demanded guarantees.

Comrade Trotsky: Where does comrade Spector stand?

Comrade Swabek: The question of comrade Spector is of secondary importance. In Toronto we initially had a group of 27 or 28 members, which, however, sank to about ten. The main blame for this was placed on comrade Spector. He certainly carries part of the responsibility because he did not do everything he should have done. It came to a split because the majority of the group there demanded that he do a certain amount of work. Spector demanded that his group be recognized. In the majority of the Toronto group there are elements similar to the Carter group. We passed a resolution in which we supported Spector's political tendencies, while also demanding the unification of both groups. Since the plenum the Spector group consists of 18 people; in addition, six sympathizers are around them. This question, however, plays no role in our conflict.

Are our differences of opinion personal or political questions? Personal questions are always involved in such fights, particularly at the beginning, when the political differences have not clearly come to the fore. In our view there are political differences, although they are not clear and are not sharply delineated.

Comrade Trotsky: A split would kill the League and greatly compromise the movement. You cannot explain the split to the workers by the confused social differences, nor by how these differences are expressed in organizational and personal forms. If an organization is politically educated and the participants have experience in factional struggles, the frictions can be minimized until major political differences are encountered. Often it is the case, however, that the disputes seem to be merely personal and organizational. The peculiarity of the situation consists in the fact that the intensity of the struggle does not correspond to the stage of development of factional formation. Both fighting factions are, so to speak, in their infancy; they have no delineated form. But at the same time they are already organized as factions and confront the League, more or less, with a split. And that can kill it. If a split occurs after sharp political struggles, it can be self-evident and natural; but as things stand in the League, I believe that there also exists an element of personal fault. The fact that the conflict has flared up

so prematurely with such intensity and that no one knows how to ease it—that also seems to me to be a negative symptom for the leadership.

For example, let us take the question of co-optation: Comrade Swabeck himself has recognized that this was not a felicitous measure for the popularity of the leadership. I wonder whether the result really justifies this measure, because the numbers are very interesting: The members and the local organizations see that all resolutions were passed unanimously, and co-optations are proposed in order to consolidate the “majority.” The members ask themselves: “What majority? You have not managed to clarify your point of view so that the minority is forced to show its colors.” The co-optation proposal has led to dissatisfaction among the members; on the one hand, they feel that this measure is undemocratic, and, on the other hand, that it is factional, very dangerous for the unity of the organization. Rather good reasons were decisive in motivating a no vote. The membership does not want a leadership forced on it artificially, and, secondly, it has plenty of concern about the unity of the organization. The result was the vote against the majority and the undermining of the majority’s position, although it wanted precisely to consolidate its position. It was an inappropriate measure which perhaps showed too much organizational impatience. As things stand, it might be better in the long run not to co-opt anyone.

The question of the secretariat is also not quite clear to me. Of course it is quite natural that Cannon was proposed as secretary, but if I were in Cannon’s place I might say, “I would in fact like a representative of the minority to work as a second secretary.” That would be an attempt to settle the disputed issues collectively, and through day-to-day collaboration the frictions might indeed be eased. The personal-organizational disputes are out of proportion to the maturation of the principled differences. It seems to me, in fact, that on the part of the majority an element of organizational “ultimatism” has played a role. It must be kept in mind that a split in the next period would be a fatal blow to the organization.

The third conference in June–July: What can it accomplish in the present situation? It can perhaps adopt good resolutions, but in respect to the disputes between the groups one can say: 110 there and 100 here, or vice versa. Everything will remain the same.

The majority only stands to lose because it cannot hope to win eight seats to the minority's one. In such a situation personal relations play a very big role. Of course, if you say to yourself that a split is unavoidable—I have my 51 percent and now I am steering straight toward throwing the others out—you can follow this course to the end, but you must have *political reasons* for doing so. The international organization has the task of applying the brakes here. The American comrades must be warned; we can by no means afford the luxury of a split in America, by no means. If the Left Opposition had more money, some comrades from the I.S. would have to be sent to America.

This perspective must be very sharply articulated: What do comrades hope to gain from the new conference and what can they hope to gain—110 to 100? If you aim straight toward having a majority of a few percentage points on your side and changing everything, then you will only lose members, because an element will immediately crystallize that will step over to the sidelines.

The thrice-weekly appearance of the *Militant* proves that the League is capable of initiative. And on this question there were no differences of opinion; here the League marches together.

What differences of opinion were there on the Weisbord question?

Comrade Swabek: I read comrade Shachtman's letter on the Weisbord question describing opinions of those in the National Committee who said they would leave the League if Weisbord were to be foisted on them. Such a portrayal is totally irresponsible.

We do not pose the question as though it *must* come to a split, but rather we pose the question of how we can avoid a split. But the comrades of the minority are driving things in that direction. We agree that we must hold onto the comrades by all means, but we also consider it necessary to explain the situation as it is.

A word on co-optation. It was doubtless an unfortunate tactic, but we were also in an unfortunate situation: In one local body the minority held the majority. We had to do something, and the co-optation proposal was adopted at the plenum unanimously; the minority stated there that it did not want to oppose it. We had to assume that this question would not become a bone of contention, otherwise we would not have proposed it.

Comrade Trotsky: In order to justify the co-optation, you would have

had to propose a resolution that would have forced the minority to vote against it. This, then, would have explained the emergency measures to the organization. But such a course was perhaps impossible because no deep-going differences of opinion existed, and precisely that turned the co-optation into an arbitrary measure.



On the Situation in the American League

Letter by Leon Trotsky to the
International Secretariat⁴⁵³

7 March 1933

*In forwarding this letter to the I.S., Trotsky noted, "I am not sending a copy to the League before I reach an agreement with you. If you agree, at least on the essentials, please send the document to New York with your decision or with a cover letter. If we disagree, I would like to know your criticisms and proposals in order to reach an agreement as soon as possible."*⁴⁵⁴

The situation in the American League demands, as you have already indicated, a prompt and decisive intervention on the part of our organization. To the extent that I can judge from the minutes of the secretariat and the correspondence, we do not have any differences with your evaluation of the situation in the American League. However, I consider it my duty to explain to you as clearly as possible how, after very detailed conversations with comrade Swabeck and a study of the documents, I regard the situation in the League and what measures appear to me to be necessary on our part.

1. For several years, the action of the League has mainly had a literary, propagandistic character. The number of members has fluctuated around the same figures, varying according to whether the work of the center was improving or worsening. The lack of progress in the movement aroused all sorts of personal antagonisms, group antagonisms, or local antagonisms, as is always the case. The same lack of progress in the movement does not allow

these antagonisms to acquire a political character. This has given and gives the struggle an exceedingly poisoned character in the absence of a principled content that is clear to everybody. The membership of the organization does not learn anything from such struggle. They are forced to regroup according to personal ties, sympathies, and antipathies. The struggle between the groups in turn acts as a brake on the movement.

2. It may very well be that in this struggle there are plausible principled differences in an embryonic form. However, the problem is that both groups anticipate a lot by sharpening the organizational struggle between the groups and the members without any connection with the development of political work and the questions it raises. In the impatient organizational maneuvers which have a disruptive effect on the League as a whole by damaging each group separately, it is impossible not to see the nefarious influence of the methods and ways of the epigone Comintern, which has trained an entire generation to solve all difficult situations through apparatus combinations at the expense of the interests of the organization as a whole. This is one of the worst features of bureaucratism.

3. A genuine solution to the internal difficulties can only be found on the path of expanding mass work. The League has taken that path. It is developing the work with a magnificent energy in three directions: a. campaign about the success of fascism in Germany and the capitulation of the Comintern; b. participation in the unemployed movement; c. participation in the independent miners trade unions (Illinois). In all these fields, the League has already scored moral successes. But—and that is the most important feature of the present situation—these first successes are accompanied not by a weakening but by a worsening of the internal struggle. What does this mean?

4. Of course, it is theoretically possible that with the transition to broader work, the potential differences may acquire an open and active political character. But so far it has not been expressed in any way. There have not been revealed in any of the three fields of work mentioned above any more or less developed, serious, hard differences. There remains another explanation: The worsening of the crisis has been caused by the very mechanism of transition from one stage of the work to another. This does not exclude that

serious differences will arise in the future, but they probably do not correspond to the lineup of the present groupings.

5. The only possible way out is through broadening and deepening the mass work, drawing fresh proletarian elements to the League, and training all the members of the League in the mass organizations. This work has already begun. But the struggle among the groups has become so bitter that a split is on the agenda. A split under these conditions would have a purely a priori character, a preventive one, so to speak, which would be incomprehensible to all but those who initiated the split. If it is difficult for us, leading members of the international Opposition, to understand the motives of the fierce struggle, it will be even harder for the American workers, including the members of the League themselves, to understand the causes of the split. This kind of split at the top would bring incalculable damage to the authority of both groups and would compromise the cause of the Left Opposition in America for a long time. Today the Stalinist bureaucrats would only have to publish the numerous declarations of the two groups fighting each other to poison all sources of sympathy for the Left Opposition. In case of a split, the situation would become a hundred times worse.

The two groups must clearly realize that in case of a split neither of them can nor will be recognized as a section of the International Left Opposition. The two halves, condemned to a lasting impotence, would find themselves in a situation similar to the present groups in Czechoslovakia who are presently not full members of the international organization, but only sympathizing groups.⁴⁵⁵

6. The preparation for the national conference of the League is taking place under the shadow of the struggle between the two groups. We can already picture to a certain degree the perspectives of the conference: more or less unanimous acceptance of the basic political resolutions, while at the same time a poisonous struggle on the questions of approving mandates and the composition of the future National Committee. Since the two groups are more or less the same size, the changes at the conference would be reduced to the group possessing 49 percent obtaining 51 percent and vice versa, and with the further application of the same methods, that would mean a split.

7. The task of our international organization in this question is, it seems to me, quite evident: not to permit a split under any circumstances now that we are on the threshold of the League's transition to mass work; to explain to all the members of the League that the leaders of the two groups are sharpening the struggle by means of impermissible organizational methods and by poisoned polemics; to condemn these methods resolutely; and to call upon all the members of the League for the defense of its unity.

8. Independently of the possible opinions of any of us separately regarding which of the two groups in the League will acquire a serious and genuine preponderance in mass work, we must as an organization leave the solution of this question to the future (it is quite possible that the leadership, after some regroupments, will be constituted from elements of both the present groups). But the *next* conference cannot in any case ensure the domination of one group, given the lack of political ground prepared for this as well as the lack of objective criteria. *The task of the next conference must consist of saving the League from a preventive split imposed from the top and thus preserving the authority of the League and its combativity for the near future.* It is necessary to pose this task in quite an imperative form before all the local groups as well as before the two groups of the central committee involved in the struggle.

9. To the extent that we can judge from correspondence, a considerable number of the members of the League, perhaps even a majority, do not belong to either of the two groups and speak with indignation of the danger of a split. Given the absence, or at least the nonexpression, of the principled basis of struggle between the two groups, *conciliationism is quite justified and a progressive factor of internal life.* It is necessary now, *at the present stage,* to support this tendency with all the authority of the international organization.

10. The preparation of the conference should, it seems to me, be conducted in the spirit of the above-mentioned considerations, which means:

- a. All the local organizations should encourage the leaders of the two groups to reduce their clashes within such limits that their speeches, declarations, etc., on both sides, cannot become a weapon in the hands of the enemy.

- b. All the theses, countertheses, and amendments must be sent out in time, not only to all the members of the League but also to the International Secretariat, so that a discussion can take place at all stages before the eyes and under the control of all the sections.
- c. The final time of the conference should be designated in agreement with the I.S. so that the latter, in case of need, will have the opportunity to delegate its representative to it.
- d. Up to the time of the conference the present National Committee, which remains, of course, should enjoy the entire support of all the members of the organization. On its part the National Committee will abstain from artificial organizational manipulation within its own body which bear a factional character.
- e. The local organizations should be guided in the election of delegates by consideration of the sufficient firmness and independence in their representatives on the question of safeguarding the unity of the League: The instructions to delegates should be voted upon in the same sense.
- f. Inside the forthcoming National Committee there should, of course, enter leaders of both groups at present engaged in the struggle; but side by side with them should be placed *some solid comrades possessing authority, not having engaged in the struggle of the two groups, and capable of bringing about a healthier atmosphere in the NC.* To this end the dimensions of the NC should be considerably broadened.
- g. In case of need, the secretariat should call a special plenum devoted to American affairs with the participation of representatives of both groups.

* * * * *

Historical developments place before the American League exceptional tasks. They open tremendous possibilities for it. Our American friends must be aware that we are following their work with the greatest attention, that we are ready to bring them our support with all the forces at our command and with all our means, and that we firmly hope that they will put an end to the internal malady and that they will issue upon a broader path.

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The Majority Has No Right to Impatience

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Arne Swabeck⁴⁵⁶

7 March 1933

Marked "strictly personal," this letter was, however, sent to the I.S. and circulated informally in the CLA. Trotsky objects to Abern's removal from the resident committee during Swabeck's absence, a decision taken by poll of the full NC.⁴⁵⁷ Trotsky further condemns the undemocratic procedure followed in drafting the CLA theses on American imperialism for the International Preconference: Swabeck used notes worked up by the Cannon group in New York without any input from the minority. Trotsky also objects to Cannon's proposal in a letter to Swabeck in Prinkipo to move the CLA headquarters to Chicago. Cannon argued:

On the tour I was also able to observe that the social composition of the western branches which I visited is better. The bureaucratic hoops around the Party out there are looser. Then there is the additional and most important fact that the working-class movement in the Midwest is, at the present time, more fluid than here. In New York the unemployment movement remains a closed Communist affair; in Chicago it is bigger and broader, more varied, and easier to penetrate. The opportunities for direct participation in class-struggle activities are greater.

Taking all this into consideration, is it not time now to move for the transfer of our national center to Chicago? I think it is. And this opinion has been strengthened by the ready agreement I have found in talks about the project with others. At Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York the comrades whom I consulted all favor the move most decisively. There is no doubt that such a step, at this time, will accelerate the transition from propaganda to agitation in the work of the League.⁴⁵⁸

After a series of discussions with you and the acquaintance with documents, I esteem notwithstanding—totally independent from the evaluation of the attitude of the minority—that in the organizational policy of the majority of the central committee there are elements of formal intransigence which may appear as bureaucratism, and which in any case will bring injury to the authority of the central committee, and to its influence rather injury than advantage.

1. After the June plenum, where all the decisions were accepted unanimously, your group attempted to have recourse to a co-optation in order to guarantee for itself a majority in the central committee, though nobody could understand in what the majority is different from the minority.
2. The proposal of the central committee to the New York branch concerning proletarianization was a mistake not in its general tendency, but in its mechanical approach to the issue and the manifestly practical hopelessness of the proposal under the given conditions.
3. In consideration of the fact that the two groups have approximately the same weight, it would be, it seems to me, reasonable for the majority to make a concession to the minority, and, after the designation of comrade Cannon as permanent secretary, to draw in also comrade Abern as assistant secretary.
4. It appears to me absolutely impermissible to deprive comrade Abern of his vote on the occasion of the departure of comrade Swabeck.
5. The elaboration of a draft thesis concerning the prospects of American imperialism on the back of the minority represents an ostensibly factional step, less justified as in this question no differences appeared up until now. The situation became that much worse, as the document was destined for discussion with foreign comrades, who in that way learned of the draft thesis before the minority members of the central committee of the American League.
6. The proposition of the immediate transfer of the headquarters to Chicago is practically equivalent to a split.
7. The allegation that, in spite of the hopes of any "optimists," the situation in the League since the passage from the propaganda to the agitation stage became yet more acute seems to me not convincing. By the passage from one stage into another the malady usually comes to the surface. But the serious successes in the field of mass work will inevitably produce a favorable influence upon the internal relations and in every case provoke a radical regroupment by gradual isolation of the disintegrating elements.

A split now would have an a priori character, understandable to nobody but its initiators, and would destroy the authority of

the Left Opposition in America for a long time to come. In the meantime, from the letters of comrade Cannon, it is particularly clear that great perspectives are opening up for the American League.

I permit myself to establish the following axiom: The oppositional minority has a certain right to manifest impatience, but the leading majority in no case.



I Accept Your Criticisms

Letter by Arne Swabeck to Leon Trotsky⁴⁵⁹

8 March 1933

Copies of this letter circulated informally in the CLA.

After thorough consideration and in the light of the discussions we have had, I find myself in complete accord with the criticism you have made of the majority group of the National Committee in your letter to me of March 7. I fully accept these criticisms as correct and wish to add the following comment to a couple of the points cited:

1. On the question of co-optation the majority was guilty, despite the political agreement it had obtained at the plenum, of initiating an organizational measure which, regardless of the declaration made by the minority not to struggle against the co-optation, nevertheless under the circumstances served to maintain and sharpen the internal conflict.

2. The proposal for proletarianization was initiated by the majority of the National Committee because of the social composition of an extremely weak proletarian basis of the New York branch. The proposal was originally accepted unanimously by the National Committee (Shachtman absent, Abern and Glotzer voting in favor with the other members), expressly to be submitted for joint discussion with the executive committee of the branch, with the endeavor to have it introduced to the branch by the National Committee and the local executive committee jointly.

3. The proposal for transfer of the League headquarters to Chicago is so far advanced only for discussion. Such transfer in due time has been accepted by all leading comrades as a generally correct orientation. It is to be understood as a proposal to be submitted for general agreement and not to be carried out in the face of definite protests which might arise at this time growing out of the internal conflict.

However, in all of their general and specific implications, the criticisms you have made are correct. I accept them in the sense that the majority of the National Committee is the responsible leading group and especially has the task of steering such a course which in no way puts strictures upon the full collaboration of all comrades, which helps to overcome the present internal factional stalemate, and which in every respect facilitates the development of the League.

I accept the criticisms as a guide for the future which I shall endeavor to have adopted in the same spirit by the responsible leading group, but which *under all conditions* I shall defend and support personally. To this I add my pledge also to be guided by the axiom established by you, so that it may serve at this juncture for the preservation of the unity of the League.

On the other hand, it is necessary to establish the fact that the present internal conflict in the League began with our disagreement over the international question. It has increased in sharpness and intensity, not ignoring the part played by the measures taken by the majority which you correctly criticize, but nevertheless becoming more acute as we pressed forward for a decisive turn in our main activities from the propaganda stage to the agitation stage. It is necessary to reiterate the fact that in the League we were confronted from the inception of the conflict with an organized factional struggle against the National Committee—that is, its majority—without these comrades having brought forward a separate platform of political differences.

The worst features of the internal conflict are expressed in the methods of personal unprincipled combinations. Of this I cite but two examples:

1. At the plenum the minority comrades accepted our correct resolution on the international question, which they had formerly opposed. They joined with us in characterizing the Carter group

as representing a "harmful tendency." After the plenum the Carter group abstained from voting on the international resolution, which it has since attacked. The majority made a proposal for unity with the minority to combat this "harmful tendency." That was rejected by the comrades who, on the contrary, united with the group whose tendency they had condemned against the majority on every disputed issue.

2. At Boston a group of comrades have been in conflict with the National Committee for a period of about three years, rejecting the unanimous trade-union policy of the National Committee (in the needle trades) from the standpoint of ultraleftism, which converts them into virtual camp followers of the Stalinist "Third Period" dogma. The comrades of the minority, nevertheless, utilize these comrades of Boston in a factional unity to adopt resolutions against the National Committee.

Such an attitude seriously militates against the necessary task of raising a cadre which genuinely seeks to adopt the Left Opposition platform and which is capable of estimating questions from fundamental political considerations and orientating itself accordingly. This attitude, I am convinced, it is necessary to struggle against. I consider this struggle not independent of, but a part of, the solution to accomplish the turn in our work more into the field of mass work. In this sense I consider it a progressive struggle.

For the coming conference of the League I urge the greatest possible collaboration of the International Secretariat. All proposals for its composition, conduct, and procedure should be first ratified by the secretariat before final action is taken by the League. The widest possible participation in the preconference discussion by the international organization and its various sections is absolutely essential. Sufficient time should be given for these measures, even if it means a considerable postponement of the preliminary date set.

I agree that this coming conference must have as its main task the preservation of the unity of the League. To this end, I believe, the full participation of all newly organized branches, including those organized most recently prior to the conference (possible branches in the mine fields), will help in this respect by bringing in new blood not saturated with the effects of the internal conflict. I am in accord with the suggestion made by you on a previous

occasion, that is, to endeavor to broaden the National Committee by adding some serious comrades who are not committed to either of the two groups in the committee.



You Were Wrong to Campaign Against Swabeck's Trip

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman¹⁶⁰

8 March 1933

This letter circulated informally in the CLA.

I have not written to you for a long time. For many reasons it has been difficult for me to respond to your last letters. Even now I am writing you very briefly. The situation in the League is currently our biggest worry here. You are moving toward a split there, and that will mean a catastrophe for the League. It is really quite inconsequential which side is more in the wrong, because both sides will be unable to explain to the workers what caused the split. And that will compromise both groups completely. In one of your letters you expressed the hope that the next conference will settle the disputes. That is not my opinion, by any means. If your group gets 51 percent, that will not alter the matter in the slightest. A decisive intervention on the part of the International Secretariat is necessary. I am corresponding with the secretariat about the situation, and hope that you will hear from them in the near future.

I would like to touch briefly on only one question here. It seems to me that you were wrong to undertake a big protest campaign against delegating comrade Swabeck. It would have been extremely opportune if he had come to Copenhagen at the time. We urgently needed a Danish-speaking comrade, and with his help we surely could have built a good section. His participation in the Copenhagen consultation also would have been of the utmost significance. Under those circumstances, perhaps the internal struggles in the American League during the last few months would not have assumed the extremely sharp character that they have. The preconference assumed much greater significance than some of

us, myself included, had imagined beforehand. Comrade Swabeck's participation was very useful. His stay here is also very useful to me and the other members of our group. I also hope that comrade Swabeck will not regret his stay here. In addition, without contact with him the intervention of the International Secretariat would not be so resolute.

I would really like to beg of you and your friends not to be too nervous, too impatient, but to take a longer view of things and not forget for a moment that we have an international organization that is by no means inclined to being one-sided, and in whose eyes the "attacker," the rabble-rouser, has much more to lose than to win.

That is all for now. Many thanks for the fishing line, which I got in good time.



Trotsky Expects More of Us

Letter by Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon⁴⁶¹

8 March 1933

At the preconference the question of the American League internal situation was left to the last. Nevertheless there was a rather thorough discussion; but I assume it is clear to you comrades that all the conference could do at the moment was to take the kind of stand the resolution expresses, that is, in reality, only to propose that the issues be exhaustively discussed. The preconference did not have both conflicting views presented. To most of the comrades, the existence of an internal conflict in the League was conveyed to them for the first time and, while they were surprised, they understood the gravity of our situation. Many questions were asked of me in an effort to arrive at more clarity, but one must admit that for comrades who have had no contact whatever with our issues, the actual differences do not stand out so distinctly.

With comrades Witte and Jan I had a good many discussions, especially the former, who was in Paris during my whole stay and remains there. They were both somewhat familiar with our situa-

tion prior to my explanations. While I naturally did not endeavor to commit them to any factional position or agreement, they are both definitely of our views as to what this minority tendency represents and also quite outspoken in this conviction. Their previous knowledge of this tendency has made it easy for them to understand the whole situation today. Witte was very anxious to have the immediate brief statements of views, which are requested for publication in the *International Bulletin*. He stated he wants to write a polemical article over his own signature as soon as these statements have appeared. His views are definitely formed and his article can be expected to be as definite. He is accepted as the leading comrade in the secretariat. He, of course, made this statement to me entirely in a personal way, and it must be regarded as such.

In general, I have considerable confidence that the International Secretariat will now be able to make a beginning toward functioning as an international political center. It is to be expected that it will be strengthened by the plenum, which will be constituted by the five sections named in my report.⁴⁶² When I speak of "function as a political center," that is naturally to be understood in a limited sense, corresponding with our present stage of development. But we must remember that the movement is young, and particularly young organizationally, and we must not have too great expectations.

The numerous letters which are on file here, the personal letters from Max and Al, really defy description as to their content. They contain no effort of moderation, neither in tone nor in content. As a matter of fact, in that respect they are much worse than anyone could expect. But that only so much more emphasizes the necessity on our part for moderation and the greatest possible degree of objectivity and maintenance of political content.

In regard to a couple of the most outrageous statements made in these letters, I made some comments to LD. But he merely laughed and said that one does not take such matters so seriously. I may say also that letters have been sent to Al which are sharper in their content than we could ever dream of.

Now I will try to describe LD's attitude toward our internal situation as revealed in the discussions we have had and to an extent already presented in documentary form. I am in this stating only such views and conclusions as he has expressed in definite form.

First of all there is a world of difference in tone, in approach, and in criticism made of our views and positions toward me and that expressed in letters to Shachtman and Glotzer whenever touching upon the questions of our internal dispute. Toward them, the tone is sharp throughout and the contents politically condemnatory. Toward me it is, while severely critical because of our being the majority group, at the same time very comradely and sympathetic. With LD as an experienced politician, that is, of course, not accidental but a political method.

He analyzes the groups in their composition and basis of the leading cores. In describing this I give only the main points, not the subsidiary which flow therefrom, which he has also mentioned. He says it is clear the majority is rooted in the soil of the class struggle and the working-class organizations. The minority is not. The tendency is for the various elements who make up the League to gravitate accordingly. He also draws the conclusion that there is a consequent degree of difference of political experience.

The majority he analyzes as intransigent politically, that is, in the good sense of the word. The minority to a great extent lacks this intransigence and that is a weakness. But the majority is altogether too intransigent in organizational questions, which is not a virtue for a group having responsibility of leadership, but rather reacts to its injury. He says this intransigence amounts to a degree of impatience and ultimatism. He does not find that in the minority, and then it is a minority not having the same responsibility nor the same powers. This aspect I will return to later on in this letter.

I have made quite clear in my presentations, and LD would without that recognize, that the logic of a factional situation as sharp as ours is a split; that is, unless something intervenes, such will be the outcome. He views a split at present as fatal and sure to destroy the authority of the Left Opposition for a long time to come. He says neither group would be able to explain to the Communist workers why two groups exist having the same platform, a good number of the membership would be lost, and it would take a long time before the workers would have confidence and join. He says that in such a case the international would be compelled to take the same action as in Czechoslovakia, that is, to refuse to recognize either group and merely to keep both as sympathizing groups. This, of course, is a logic that no argument

can circumvent, as it is entirely correct, and more so as, in his view, the differences do not come near justifying a split. That, also, anyone must admit upon sober judgment to be correct. But his statement that the international, in case of a split, would not be able to recognize either group also shows that he is not yet ready to make a choice of one as against the other, based upon political or any other considerations. At the same time, he says, a split later—that is an entirely different question and can perhaps even become very necessary.

He looks upon our group as the responsible leading group and says so quite frankly: That is what we are, but we must live up to it. In view of this, he is much more critical of us, that is, much more critical of what mistakes we make. He demands more from us. He particularly demands modifications and concessions on our part which will serve as measures to avoid a split direction. He says the majority is the section to give the concessions. He says, above all, we must maintain the constitution inviolably and maintain the correct organizational forms. For an oppositional minority to violate such rules, that is entirely a different thing. He cites the many experiences of Lenin, how he would give concession after concession until there was a whole record, and after that it was possible to show clearly that the other side was in the wrong. He says Lenin would often say to an organizational proposal, quite an innocuous one, but in his mind not entirely formally correct: "No, we cannot do that because Shliapnikov will immediately pick it up and it will not appear quite right." And at that Shliapnikov was in the chronic opposition.

He sees our weakness in this respect. He points out particularly that such arbitrary measures as we have taken are the kind which will help to really obscure the issues and smother political differences which may lie hidden, or prevent them from coming out into the open. He insists upon a longer perspective as the only possible way, if serious, but unclear, differences exist, to take political form.

I have tried to picture these views as objectively as I am able, as you will perhaps find further substantiated in the documents enclosed. I am compelled to agree completely with him, not merely out of his superior method of convincing arguments, but because what he has said, even in the form that I am trying to picture it here, is correct. He is, as a result of our discussions and having

recently also read a number of the various statements and declarations, much more concerned with the question of a possible split than with anything else in regard to our situation. Next I will say he is *much more* concerned about us as a majority and responsible group than he is with the position and attitude of the minority. But in general he thinks that *we* have permitted the atmosphere to become entirely too poisoned, and that the sharpness of the fight has far outgrown what is yet the childhood of our factions and factional issues.

He cannot see what the conference can accomplish in the way of settling any issue. He says perhaps 100 on the one side and 110 on the other, what will it settle, what will the majority have to gain. He wants to seek to make it a transition, the main task of which must be to guarantee against a split. I am compelled to agree with him also in this question, that the conference must preserve the unity of the League. A split is out of the question so long that there are no clearly defined political differences. It is because of this latter, the fact that there are no such clearly defined differences, that LD so much stresses the question of a split, both in the sense that it will thereby so much more easily occur and in the sense that it would thereby be so much more fatal.

Now for some comments of my own. The two letters enclosed are really self-explanatory: LD's letter to me and my answer. I have not yet had his reaction to my answer. But the contents of his letter to me he conveyed to me in full before they were put in final written form. I have given them much consideration and, hence, the kind of an answer that I have made. The points raised against us, and especially the motivation from which he made them and the general idea behind them, are such as to demand the most serious consideration on our part. I believe in view of what I have explained from our discussion they become clear. In regard to the questions of a distinct organizational character, co-optation, the secretaryship, and the matter of Abern's vote, he fully understands the whole implication, the question of reflecting the will of the majority of the NC in the resident committee, the question of having such a committee which makes possible that work can go ahead; all this is fully clear to him; and he nevertheless insists that these organizational methods on our part are something we have carried over from the time of Stalinism. He says such measures would be unheard of in Lenin's time. And above all he insists such

measures can only hurt the authority of our leadership. I was somewhat inclined to the idea that the objection contained in regard to the discussion material, which he calls the draft thesis, represented rather an effort to find as much ground as possible out of little to make the criticism more severe. But I must agree that although a copy was forwarded to America before it was presented to anyone here and again forwarded, in abbreviated form, in my official report from the conference, it is nevertheless true that I have discussed the contents with comrades of the secretariat and with LD as representing our views, before I knew what is the attitude toward it of the minority on the committee. In its essence such is a mistake, particularly when remembering that I am an official delegate of the League. This is one of the small questions of being formally correct in an organizational sense of which he quotes so often from Lenin and which he considers so essential for a majority group. In this he draws a clear distinction from political questions in which he judges essentially the broad and the principled contents.

On the question of proletarianization LD understands our motivation, springing from the unhealthy conditions in the New York branch. He does not consider its general tendency incorrect; but he doubts the correctness under the conditions in which the proposal was advanced, in general, in view of the position of the Left Opposition and its relation to nonproletarians, and in particular, in view of our small numbers. However, his main fears in respect to this question are the fact that he considers it a general tendency showing our organizational intransigence, or inflexibility, in a difficult internal situation.

In this discussion between LD and myself, you also have my answer to the proposal for transfer of the headquarters at this time. Personally, as you know, I have generally held the view that such a transfer is correct and the sooner it can be feasible, the better. But now particularly it must be considered in close connection with our internal situation, not only from the point of view of its advantages not merely to a leading group which is correct in the main, but to the League as a whole; it must however also be considered from its negative aspect in regard to the internal situation. If general agreement can be obtained for the proposal, then it should be carried out by all means as soon as practicable. It should not be done in the face of opposition, even though it be factionally

motivated; then it is much more correct to modify and to postpone the question. Otherwise, it will give rise to a new issue of a mechanical character. It would tend to conceal the real issues because the fight would be made against the transfer, not in regard to its basic import to the League, but centering entirely around the question of time of transfer, the "arbitrary" method by which it was forced through, etc., etc.

In general, in view of the political issues of differences which do not yet stand out clearly and in view of the acute internal situation (split situation), it is both necessary and correct to modify organizationally, even to make concessions on organizational measures affecting internal relations. We must remember that whatever the internal consequences from such measures, regardless of factional demagoguery or misuses, we are responsible as the leading group. Also, anything on our part in this respect which tends to blur the political issues, we become responsible for, and we must therefore endeavor diligently to avoid. LD maintains that conciliationism in such situations becomes a progressive tendency. That is true, of course. It is true from the point of view that if political differences lie hidden, they must be developed and brought into the open. It is true from the point of view that unity, before political differences have developed to a point of justifying a split, is such a paramount necessity. But let me not be misunderstood, the question of conciliationism here is in regard only to internal organizational measures, or organizational measures affecting internal relations.

The contention made in point no. 7 of LD's letter of March 7 may seem insufficient by a superficial reading.⁴⁶³ But essentially it is correct. What we are just now experiencing in the League, an internal situation becoming more acute instead of lessening just at the time when the turn of activities takes more decisive form, may be just the process of throwing the "malady to the surface." On the other hand it does also indicate deeper social roots to the conflict. But so far it only indicates, and it must be probed deeper and, if actually so, it must be laid open. For that also, this organizational modification and greater conciliation is necessary, in order to enable a more normal process of differentiation. If correctly pursued, the results will establish themselves more quickly and more decisively, either in clear political divergences and consequent elimination of the unhealthy sections or elements, or else

in lessening of the acute friction and leading toward greater political and, consequently, also organizational unity, and in all events to a healthy regroupment. Our trouble is that at present we have a variant in between the two mentioned.

LD also gives good examples of utilization of people and the necessity therefor (that is, yet considering a stage where political differences have not clearly developed). According to LD, Lenin would say: "We need Kamenev in the Politbureau, he represents a vacillating tendency, but one which is quite widespread in the party and by having him in the Politbureau we can better control this tendency." He would say about Tomsky: "Yes, he represents something opportunistic which very easily develops in people engaged in practical trade-union work, but precisely therefore we must have the closest possible contact with him."

Finally, in regard to the coming conference and my own attitude. It is my opinion that there is absolutely nothing lost, as a matter of fact, it will be much better, if the final date is postponed until about the latter part of September. Were it held now, it would settle nothing, but only be a means to more acute conflict the day after; it would not improve internal relations, nor facilitate the turn of our work, and above all, it would not in the least serve as a brake upon the course toward a split at this juncture. More time is necessary in order to, as much as possible, give the differences which exist a political content and actually show to what degree political differences exist. With a correct attitude by the leadership toward internal organizational measures, in combination with the turn in our work, the increase in mass work, and consequently new proletarian recruits, then it becomes precisely that kind of a period which will give political content and force political differences into the open. That also gives time for preparations to avoid a split at this time. The final date should be set only in collaboration with the International Secretariat, in such a way as to give much time for discussion, not only of the issues, but also of what measures are to be taken to safeguard the future. We should insist upon every new recruit, up until the date of the conference, and every new branch organized, up until that date, having full rights of participation. In every way there is everything to gain from this. The group which is correct will gain and the League as a whole will gain by the effects of this new blood taking direct part in our affairs internally.

LD has written the secretariat extensively urging it to give the closest possible attention to the conference, to take all possible measures to preserve unity, urging it to appeal to the membership of the League in this sense.

The question, which you find mentioned in my letter to LD, of finding a couple of comrades not committed to either group who could be added to the National Committee: I am sure that when you give the whole question thorough consideration, you will also agree that such a step would be correct at the present juncture. In practice, however, it is not so simple. It will, of course, have to be approached genuinely, and not in the sense of any fake independent elements serving as a more effective cover for one faction. But if an agreement in principle is at hand, the practical aspect can be discussed for a solution later.

I had intended to close, but must first convey a few points of information and also mention a couple of technical points.

LD has just now informed me that he thinks my declaration of March 8 is very good. He says he felt quite pessimistic before about our situation, now he feels optimistic. He wrote Shachtman one short sharp letter; now he can write him another and apply much more pressure. These were his statements. I saw the letter mentioned. It was sharp. But these are, of course, statements and actions of a personal character.

Two days ago we received a notice from the USSR that it is rumored Rakovsky is dead. The same day a letter arrived from Paris saying that the French minister of education had addressed an inquiry to the Soviet embassy concerning the rumors of Rakovsky's death. This inquiry was made three weeks ago and no answer to date. I do not believe this should be used publicly yet. But here it struck LD rather hard coming so close upon the heels of the death of his daughter.

You remember I mentioned before the prospect of possibly having an American comrade here, that is, to remain for a considerable period of time, for the purpose of LD's security, as well as to cooperate in work in English. I still believe that would be a good step, but, meanwhile, it happened that from England the offer came of comrade Sara coming here for a while.⁴⁶⁴ LD did not accept the offer, replying that at the present moment I am here and it is not excluded that he later may leave Prinkipo for a

while. Actually he entertains a secret hope that he may obtain a visa and will be able to visit America.

I note your mentioning my return. I agree that it is time to think of the arrangements. By the time this letter reaches you, most of the important aspects of my visit will have been discussed and there would be no need of prolonging my stay on the island. I realize it is a good school, and personally I would have much to gain, but organizationally it is otherwise. The return trip is the question of money. I should, if at all possible, make another visit to the secretariat for some further consultations with the comrades. I should by all means spend a few days in Germany on the way and, if possible, a couple of days in Greece to learn a little from the very efficient Archio-Marxist organization and work methods. I hope you proceed without delay on the money question. I may say in this connection that at present the financial conditions of the Prinkipo nucleus is very precarious. The Copenhagen trip represented a deficit of about \$2,000.

You have sent copies of minutes, documents, etc., here to me. That is not necessary and better not. I will just have to carry it around and can be informed from copies coming to LD. But I do wish to ask you to send a complete set to my Bronx address from NC minutes no. 114, so that I will be sure to have a set for my file.

The advances that are being made by the League are creating considerable encouragement here. Otherwise, having looked a little into the European states under reactionary dictatorships or dictatorships in the making, I admit with "genuine pride" that the good old U.S. is about the only democratic country left in this capitalist world. With this appropriate note I close, and with the warmest regards and Opposition greetings to all the comrades, yourself especially.



A Split Would Be a Catastrophe

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer⁴⁶⁵

14 March 1933

I have not written you for a very long time. This is explained not only because I was very much occupied with unpostponable work but also because I first wanted to get a more or less clear picture of the situation in the American League. Now I feel that I have attained some degree of clarity. I have already written comrade Shachtman very briefly about this, and I can only give you the same advice: In no case and under no circumstances should you aggravate the situation in the League. The International Secretariat will, I hope, intervene in the next few days in the American question. Any impatience on the part of your group would bring things close to a split. And a split without a political physiognomy is the most dangerous kind of miscarriage, capable of killing the mother as well as the child. Also, the hope that the upcoming national conference will put everything "right" seems false to me. Under the present conditions, the conference would only bring about an insignificant shift in the relationship of forces. It is rather trivial whether your group has five representatives on the central committee and the other four, or vice versa, since one group is dependent on the other if you do not want to drive matters to a split, i.e., to a catastrophe. Do not be impatient, dear Glotzer. You must prepare yourself for long-term work.

You will say to me, "And the others, the Cannon group?" Of course we are dealing simultaneously with both groups. You protested strenuously against comrade Swabeck's trip. Quite unjustifiably. His trip was highly useful for the leading European comrades, also for us here, as well as for Swabeck himself. I am sure that comrade Swabeck, for his part, will contribute all he can to bringing life in the League back to a normal course.

You must be clear about one thing: Should it come to a split, the League would be degraded to two entirely insignificant grouplets, which in the best case could belong to the International

Left Opposition as sympathizers, approximately as is the case in Czechoslovakia.

I await your reply with great interest.



Germany and the USSR

by Leon Trotsky

17 March 1933

*This was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 11 (31 March 1933), marked "For the information of the sections of the International Left Opposition."*⁴⁶⁶

1. The complete absence of resistance on the part of the German workers has provoked certain troubles within our own ranks. We expected that the on-march of the fascist danger would surmount not only the perfidious policy of the reformists but also the ultimatist sabotage of the Stalinists. These hopes were not confirmed. Were our expectations false? This question we cannot put in such a formal manner. We were *obliged* to proceed from a course based upon resistance and to do all in our power for its realization. To acknowledge a priori the impossibility of resistance would have meant not to push the proletariat forward but to introduce a supplementary demoralizing element.

The events have brought their verification. The first lesson of this proof is drawn in Trotsky's article "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat."⁴⁶⁷ Now one can say almost with certainty that only a change of conjuncture would create an impulse toward a real mass struggle. In the meantime the task is mainly one of criticism and of preparation. The fascist terror regime will be a serious test for our cadres as a whole and for each member in particular. It is precisely such a period which steels and educates the revolutionists. So long as the fascists tolerate the existence of the trade unions it is necessary for the Left Oppositionists at all costs to penetrate them and take up definite conspiratorial work within them. The transition to illegality does not simply mean to go

underground (establishment of an organ in a foreign country, smuggling and distribution, illegal nuclei within the country, etc.), but also ability to undertake the conspiratorial work within the mass organizations to the extent that these exist.

2. The question of the possible role of the Red Army is posed sharply for many comrades. It is evidently not a question of revision of our principled position. If the internal situation in the USSR had permitted, the Soviet government, at the time of Hitler's first approach toward power, should have mobilized some army corps in White Russia and the Ukraine, naturally under the shield of the defense of the Soviet borders. Based upon the indisputable idea that the Red Army can only *assist* and not *replace* the revolution in another country, some comrades incline to the conclusion that in the absence of open civil war in Germany it would be inadmissible to take recourse to a mobilization in the USSR. To put the question in such a manner is too abstract. Naturally the Red Army cannot replace the German workers in making the revolution, rather it can only assist the revolution of the German workers. But in the different stages this assistance can have different manifestations. For example, the Red Army can assist the German workers to *commence* the revolution.

What paralyzed the German proletariat was the feeling of disunity, isolation, and despair. Merely the perspective of armed assistance from the outside would have exercised an enormously encouraging influence upon the vanguard. The first serious act of resistance against Hitler on the part of the German workers could have provoked a breach between fascist Germany and the USSR and could have led to a military solution. The Soviet government cannot have the slightest interest in acting the *aggressor*. It is not a question of principle but a question of the political expediency. To the peasant masses a war with the objective of assisting the German proletariat would have been little comprehensible. But it is possible to draw the peasants into the kind of war which commences as a *defense* of the Soviet territory against a menacing danger. (All that was said in the *History* by Trotsky on this subject, the defense and the attack in regard to revolution, relates no less to the question of war.)

The form of the Red Army action in the German events naturally would have to be entirely in accordance with the development

of these events and in accordance with the spirit of the German working masses. But just because the German workers felt themselves unable to break the chains of passivity, the initiative in the struggle, even in the preliminary form mentioned above, could have belonged to the Red Army. *The obstacle to this initiative, however, is not the present situation in Germany, but the situation in the USSR.* It appears that many foreign comrades give insufficient attention to this side of the question. It is more than a year ago that we spoke of the necessity of the intervention of the Red Army in case fascism should arrive in power. In this we based ourselves upon the hope that not only in Germany but also in Russia the necessary political change would be produced which would improve the economic situation, and that thereby the Soviet power would have acquired the necessary freedom of movement. In reality, however, the internal developments have during the last year assumed an extremely unfavorable character. The economic situation as well as the spirit of the masses renders a war difficult to the highest degree. All information from the USSR affirms that under the present conditions the slogan of military assistance to the German proletariat would appear even to the advanced Russian workers as unrealizable, unreal, and fantastic.

We do not yield one iota of our principled position. But the position of active internationalism serves us today above all for the purpose of pursuing an *unmerciful criticism of the Stalinist bureaucracy which in the decisive hour paralyzes the workers state*, yet we can in no case leave the objective situation out of consideration: The consequences of the mistakes have become transformed into objective factors. To demand the mobilization of the Red Army under the present conditions would be sheer adventurism. But so much more resolutely must we demand a change in the policy of the USSR in the name of the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship and the active role of the Red Army.



We Have Made Some Errors

Letter by James P. Cannon to Comrades⁴⁶⁸

27 March 1933

This letter was written to Cannon's leading supporters around the country. In a letter to Swabeck, drafted subsequently but never sent, Cannon reported that Oehler, Dunne, and Skoglund concurred with the New York Cannon faction's acceptance of Trotsky's criticisms. He further noted:

*Our aims in the internal struggle have been indubitably correct, and the future of the movement is bound up with their achievement. On this point there is not a shadow of a doubt in our ranks. But particularly since the plenum, it must be admitted that we allowed ourselves to a considerable extent to give way to impatience, to be caught in the logic of a factional situation, and to assist thereby the efforts of others to confuse and muddle the important and essential issues.*⁴⁶⁹

I am sending you copies of the letter from Arne and two other documents received from him—one, the criticisms of comrade Trotsky, and the other, Arne's reply. In studying this criticism it should be remembered that it is addressed to us, as stated, "totally independent from the evaluation of the attitude of the minority."

We have talked the thing over here and are all pretty much of the opinion that we will have to give this criticism very serious consideration on its merits and make some gestures and modifications in our organization policy. Not, however, out of political conciliation toward the corrupt petty-bourgeois political methods of the Shachtman clique, but in order to wage a more effective struggle against them.

I am very anxious to hear from you immediately and to have your opinions before answering Arne.

I don't doubt we have made some errors. But we have made some errors of a secondary character in a fight that has been fundamentally correct and necessary. It seems to me the Old Man is leaning over backward to find points of criticism because he is afraid we are driving to a split too soon. It is to be noted, however, that his criticism of us is restricted entirely to the question of organization policy.

Please let me know right away if you will agree for me to make a few motions in the NC respecting organization concessions along the lines specified by the Old Man. As for political concessions I propose that we give nothing.

PS: I am having a hell of a time here with financial problems at the office and double ones at home.



Resolution on the Situation in the American League

International Secretariat

[April 1933]

This undated resolution was published in International Bulletin of the Communist Left Opposition no. 2/3 (April 1933).

In its resolution on the differences within the American League, the preconference of the ILO emphasized the necessity of placing before the international Opposition the conflict within the leadership of the American organization. In view of the fact that up to now the discussion material has not yet arrived, and according to the latest information the situation is full of the danger of a split and more and more hinders the work of the American League, the I.S. considers it its imperative duty to intervene to address itself on behalf of the ILO to the members of the League and point out this danger to them, drawing their attention to the following points.

1. The direction in which the League has begun to engage itself recently, of active participation in the struggle of the working masses, is the one which can surely lead the League to a higher stage of its existence; put an end to the purely literary and propagandist activity; and assure real progress to the League. By this work, it will succeed in drawing new elements into the organization and in realizing a better selection of cadres.

2. On the other hand, the work cannot give results so long as the factional struggle, which poisons the internal life of the League,

will continue within the group. This struggle, having up to the present no clear political content, does not permit the organization to march forward. It prevents and stops the adherence of new members to the League; it produces discouragement among members who are not sufficiently firm as yet, instead of educating them; and positively does injury to the work of the LO in America.

3. Still what would be the situation if a split occurred in the League on the basis of this conflict? Such a split would not be understandable to the members and still less so for the workers who follow the League and would compromise for a long time the LO in America. The I.S. appeals to the members of the League to prevent a split in the League at any cost, to demand the concentration of the forces of the League for the realization of the objectives which have been posed—work among the masses, the unemployed, among the trade unions, etc., and to demand that the factional struggle must stop.

4. The I.S. believes that the conference of the League should be held after a profound discussion within the whole organization on the concrete tasks of the League and should take up these questions and secure a leadership which will dispose all its forces for the realization of these tasks. A concentration of forces in the leadership and the enlargement of the same leadership with the participation of the militants, especially tested workers, imbued with the spirit of positive work, seem necessary to us.

Grand perspectives are opening up before the American League. We are convinced that the members of the American Opposition will rise to the heights of the period which the Communist movement is passing through in Germany, of the danger which is threatening the USSR, and the tasks which confront the Bolshevik-Leninists; and, surmounting the internal crisis, will get to work to transform the American League into a champion of the struggles of the American proletariat and a Bolshevik guide for Communism in its country.

Concession on Organizational Questions

by James P. Cannon⁴⁷⁰

5 April 1933

Cannon submitted these motions to the 5 April 1933 resident committee meeting, which Shachtman and Abern also attended. He described his motivation in an unfinished letter to Swabeck:

From these motions it will be clear that our group is ready to do everything to ensure a democratically organized conference and to establish safeguards against organizational split. The action should also convince comrade Trotsky that we are by no means so uncivilized as he seems to fear. The motions, taken together, are obviously in the nature of concessions to the minority. They are directly prompted by the criticisms of comrade Trotsky. If they result in a certain easing up of the internal tension, the credit will belong in the first place to him, and to us only in a secondary place, insofar as our action shows that we are willing to learn, to improve our manners, and to allay suspicions about our cannibalistic propensities.⁴⁷¹

At Shachtman's request voting was tabled until the following meeting. Motion no. 3 refers to a united-front conference called for April 30 in Chicago at the initiative of the Tom Mooney Molders' Defense Committee to revive the labor campaign to free Tom Mooney. Both the CLA and the Communist Party were endorsers.

1. All decisions in regard to the national conference of the League, arrangements, representation, and other organizational questions, shall be subject to ratification by the International Secretariat in case of disagreement in the National Committee.
2. The functioning NC is to consist of all members resident in New York. Disputed questions may be appealed by referendum to the full committee.
3. As previously decided, comrade Cannon shall arrange a speaking tour to the West, timing the schedule so as to be in Chicago as a delegate of the League to the Mooney congress on April 30. Thereafter he is to go into the Illinois field for a period of work among the miners in cooperation with comrade Oehler, who is also to remain in the field.

4. During the absence of comrade Cannon, comrade Abern shall conduct the work of the national office as acting secretary.
5. The mining campaign is to be put before the membership as the central task of the League in the next period in the field of mass work and a special fund shall be raised to finance it.
6. Comrade Shachtman shall make a tour of the eastern branches now, completing the circuit of the western branches about the time that comrade Cannon returns from Illinois and finishes his tour with meetings in the eastern points.
7. A special appeal shall be made by the NC for the funds necessary for the return journey of comrade Swabeck.



Response on Organizational Questions

by Max Shachtman⁴⁷²

7 April 1933

At the 7 April 1933 resident committee meeting Shachtman counterposed these motions to Cannon's from April 5. With only Cannon, Shachtman, and Abern in attendance and with Abern not voting, the committee deadlocked on four out of seven questions, including Cannon's projected trip to the Mooney conference and Illinois coalfields. In sending both sets of motions to Swabeck in Prinkipo, Cannon noted:

At the moment when the situation has matured and the ground has been prepared by the preliminary work of comrade Oehler for my going into the coalfield, the project is tied up by a deadlock in the committee. We are sending the motions out for referendum vote. But there is very little hope that it will yield anything except a tie vote. The action of Abern and Shachtman in this matter is a real blow at our mining campaign. Now is just the time to strike there with full force.⁴⁷³

Shachtman voted for Cannon's motions to give the I.S. veto power over conference arrangements, to make the mining campaign a priority, and to undertake a fund drive for Swabeck's return. Cannon did not vote for any of Shachtman's motions.

Shachtman's third motion refers to joint public meetings with the Weisbord group. In a February 15 declaration, the Communist League

of Struggle forthrightly stated, "The group as a whole fully accepts comrade Trotsky's views" on the centrist character of Stalinism. Moreover, it abandoned its characterizations of the CLA as a "very plain right-wing sectarian group," and a "factional remnant of the old Cannon group in the Party using the name of L.D. Trotsky as a mask."⁴⁷⁴ In subsequent discussions the CLS accepted the CLA as the official section of the *International Left Opposition* and agreed to engage in joint work with a perspective toward fusion. The first step was to be joint forums in New York and New Jersey.⁴⁷⁵

1. The National Committee is to consist of all the members elected at the last national conference. The resident committee, composed of all the members resident in New York, shall have full power to act subject to ratification, when necessary, of the members of the National Committee not resident in New York. Toward this end, the decision to deprive comrade Abern of his vote in the resident committee is hereby revoked. Toward the same end, the decision to replace the resident committee by a "political committee" is also revoked.

2. Comrade Shachtman shall begin a national tour of the League, with his first meeting on April 21 in Boston, then to the Canadian cities, to Chicago, from there to cover the Illinois mine field and the western branches, to return by the "southern route" with a final meeting in Philadelphia, speaking mainly on the crisis in the USSR and the situation in Germany.

3. Until the return of comrade Swabeck, comrade Cannon shall devote himself mainly to the center, also covering, together with representatives of the Weisbord group, the cities proximate to New York where joint meetings of the two organizations are to be held.



Request for Advice on Allard

Letter by James P. Cannon to Leon Trotsky⁴⁷⁶

14 April 1933

With this letter Cannon enclosed a copy of his April 10 letter to Gerry Allard in Gillespie,⁴⁷⁷ which informed Allard of the unanimous decision of the 3 April 1933 resident committee meeting: "That the next issue of the Militant publish an article polemicizing in a comradely tone and spirit with the reformist views expressed in the columns of the Progressive Miner and the false or ambiguous ideas conflicting with the Left Opposition standpoint voiced in the personal column of comrade Allard."⁴⁷⁸ The committee also noted that Allard had disagreed with other members of the CLA steering committee on several questions at the April 2 Gillespie conference.

Enclosed herewith you will find a copy of a letter which we have sent to comrade Gerry Allard, a member of the League who holds a prominent position in the Progressive Miners Union in Illinois and is editor of their official organ. The letter is largely self-explanatory. Comrade Swabeck, if he is still there when this arrives, can supplement the information as he is very well acquainted with the whole question.

The problem is undoubtedly a very important one for us and one that will arise many times in various forms as the League progresses as a factor in the class struggle and roots itself in the trade unions. It is highly important that we do not bungle the job, and we should have some advice from you if possible.

This is all the more necessary because we seem to have a certain difference of opinion in the NC on the question. The difference, as it seems to me, is one of method and tempo in dealing with comrade Allard. In NC minutes no. 135, paragraph no. 7 of comrade Shachtman's motion, the problem is formulated as one of "coming *now* to a *final* conclusion in this case."⁴⁷⁹ This appears to me as too abrupt, as a premise that can force us to break with comrade Allard prematurely, before all means of pressure and persuasion have been exhausted and before the impossibility of

correcting comrade Allard has been fully demonstrated. As a matter of fact, I myself am by no means convinced that we cannot bring comrade Allard along. His difficulty, in my opinion, comes chiefly from his tendency to adapt himself to the mass movement and his lack of political understanding and experience. His position is difficult and complicated. Above all, he needs direct and constant political aid. It is from this point of view that I emphasize so strongly the necessity of having a more experienced member of the NC present in the mining field in the next period.

I am finishing a document which embodies my estimation of the Illinois mining situation and our tasks there. As soon as it is finished, I will send you a copy. Meantime, I wish you would give some consideration to the special question of comrade Allard.



We Don't Want a Split

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky⁴⁸⁰

15 April 1933

In this letter Shachtman refers to repeated disputes in the resident committee over setting the date for the League's third national conference. At a 29 December 1932 meeting Shachtman and Abern proposed to hold the conference on May 1. Instead, the committee adopted Cannon's proposal to begin preparations, with the conference date to be set later. At the January 12 resident committee meeting Shachtman, noting that the New York, Boston, and Chicago branches had voted for a conference, moved again for the May 1 date. Cannon counterposed June 30, to allow for these preparation and the statutory three-month discussion period. By the time the question was voted on January 23 Shachtman and Abern had changed their preferred date to June 1, but the June 30 date still won. At subsequent resident committee meetings Shachtman repeatedly accused Cannon of delaying conference preparations.

Comrade Sara Weber tells me that she has already written to you concerning the arrangements for her work as your technical assistant. In her letter she takes up all the questions involved more clearly than I could do so; consequently, it becomes unnecessary

for me to answer in detail that part of your recent correspondence which deals with her. I can only add that if you find it possible to conclude the arrangements satisfactorily, you will find her a capable and devoted worker who will prove to be of considerable help to you. I hope, also, that you will be able to make the necessary arrangements about her quarters, as that appears to be the only question disturbing her; in every other respect, she appears to be delighted with the prospect of being able to assist you. From the financial standpoint, as you know, she will in no way constitute a problem for the "Prinkipo treasury"—her requirements are modest enough.

Now as to the other questions which deal directly with the life of the League. We have not yet received any communication from the International Secretariat with regard to our internal dispute and it is consequently impossible for me to express myself one way or another on the intervention of the secretariat to which you refer in your letter of March 8. However, your letter, together with the one you wrote to comrade Glotzer (who was good enough to send me a copy), raises some questions to which it is necessary to reply.

What you say about the danger of a split in the American League is correct in this sense: It would retard the development of the Opposition in this country for a long period of time because, as matters stand now, it would be difficult to explain to the workers close to us why the split occurred. I think that you exaggerate beyond reality the "imminence" or "inevitability" of a split in the League, but for the moment that is not the most important question. What is more important at the present time is to determine *what* and *who* are primarily responsible for accentuating whatever split danger does exist. We are in no way willing to take this responsibility upon ourselves. It is not we who ever raised the question of a split perspective for the League. That was done by the group of comrade Cannon, in his faction circular letter to comrade Oehler about a year ago (30 April 1932—I sent you a copy of it), the central point of which was contained in the conclusion Cannon drew from the prospect of his faction losing the leadership of the League: "The downfall of the League as it exists today would inevitably follow. It would become necessary for the smaller group, which has been drowned out in the clamor of demagoguery, to begin all over again."⁴⁸¹ Can this have two meanings? Can any

other significance be attached to the campaign Cannon has conducted against us ever since on the grounds that we are the group of the petty bourgeoisie in the League, whereas he represents the "revolutionary kernel"; or (as is the case in his latest polemic, on the occasion of the dispute over the Red Army), that we have "fundamental principled differences" with the Bolshevik conception, that we are the channel through which Stalinism finds its way into the League, that we are capitulating to Stalinism, etc., etc.? I do not want to present our internal situation as though our group has done nothing at all to sharpen relations. Under provocations and in the intensity and heat of a factional struggle, it is not always possible to maintain an absolutely perfect equilibrium. But I do not think that it is a question of "distributing the blame" in this sense: One group is 49 percent wrong and the other group is 51 percent wrong. It is much more a question of establishing a healthy, normal regime in the American Opposition, with proper (instead of the present very bad) relationships between the leadership and the membership, with the application of internal methods and policies which will make it possible to deal with political questions, problems of the day, and disputes of any serious nature in an objective and fruitful manner. In the solution of this problem, the Cannon group has taken an almost invariably wrong and harmful position. We have not been able to counteract this position in any way other than carrying on a fight against it. And in this we have not only had the support of the majority of the League's membership, but also of numerous comrades who are not associated "organizationally" with our group (especially in New York), yet who are unwilling to let pass without protest the actions of the Cannon faction.

Whatever assistance you and the international organization will be able to give us in the form of counsel and suggestions toward the end of solving the internal problems of the League will not be met antagonistically by us; it will be welcomed. "Angriffe" [attacks] and "Scharfmacherei" [rabble-rousing] will not be our contribution to the solving of the problem. I have tried at all times in my correspondence with you to make this clear, in referring to the numerous disputes which have arisen in the course of the last year.

What you say with regard to a national conference of the American League is not entirely clear to me. The conference will not, it goes without saying, establish peace and harmony in the

League at one blow. That we never expected. But it will bring the present dispute to a conclusion in the sense of permitting the membership as a whole to express a judgment upon it. What other way is there? It is not healthy for the League to continue in the present state of incertitude, of artificial protraction and delay. The Cannon group is at the present time in a minority in the League; the majority of the membership does not at all agree with its policies and methods. Only for this reason has the conference been deliberately postponed and postponed, time and again. You seem to have the impression that we are trying to hasten the convocation of the conference at too early a date, at an unreasonable and dangerous speed. That is not the case. For months, Cannon repeatedly declared that as soon as the minority expresses the wish for a national conference, he would vote for it instantly. As soon as the "postplenum discussion" was over, we made the proposal for a conference. It was promptly defeated. We had no other recourse than the democratic procedure provided for by the League's statutes: an appeal to the membership. The important branches voted for a conference. Only then did the Cannon group agree to setting a date. We finally compromised on the date of June 30. But the preparations have been dragged out so unnecessarily that I have no doubt that we shall be confronted with a proposal for a new postponement—perhaps to the Greek Calends. Our "impatience" in this question lies only in having accepted the challenge, made by Cannon, that we should propose a conference. We did propose it; the date has been set by unanimous consent; we are intent upon having the date adhered to. As to the danger of a split at the conference, whoever undertakes it will be playing with fire. We are quite ready to abide by the decisions of the conference in any case.

And by a conference, we have in mind one which really represents the membership. We do *not* have in mind a conference at which branches with one member shall suddenly appear as branches with "five" members—as is being tried now with regard to our Kansas City branch; or that branches with 20 or more members—as is the case in Toronto, where the Cannon group has no supporters—shall be represented at the conference only by "fraternal delegates," i.e., with voice but no vote. Decisions adopted by a conference organized on such a basis (and I must tell you plainly that I am more than apprehensive that it will be attempted),

will not be worth very much as a solution of our difficulties, any more than did Landau's "famous" conference organized with "Ludwigshafen branches."⁴⁸²

At all events, I want to repeat here the opinion of all our comrades: The danger of a split does not come from our side. We will not, I need hardly say it, undertake a split, and we shall endeavor to do all we can to prevent a split from being precipitated.

With regard to the trip of comrade Swabeck, I am glad to learn that it has proved to be so valuable. In the midst of the dispute over the question of comrade Swabeck going to Europe, I wrote you that we had no objections to his departure. We could not, however, vote to send him as our representative; first, because he represents the views and opinions of his faction and not of us; second, because our proposals for a preliminary discussion in the National Committee and the League on the problems before the International Left Opposition—a discussion on the basis of which Swabeck would have been better able to represent the standpoint of the organization as a whole—were rejected by the committee's majority, and comrade Swabeck was dispatched to participate in the international conference not only without the League discussing the problems of the conference, but without even the National Committee devoting ten minutes to such a discussion.

* * * * *

I have read hastily the protocol of your discussion with comrade Swabeck of the Negro question in the United States.⁴⁸³ It is not possible to go into detail on the question in this letter. Unfortunately, however, I am unable to agree with your position. At first glance, it strikes me as a rigid application of the Bolshevik standpoint to the question of oppressed nationalities *in general*, to the specific, and almost wholly unique, question of the Negroes in the United States. I have written an extensive pamphlet on the question and am now going over the manuscript for final corrections.⁴⁸⁴ I am proposing to the League to publish it and I shall take the liberty of sending you a copy of the manuscript for your perusal. While it is essentially a semipropagandistic-semiagitational pamphlet, I also attempt to deal with the question from a fundamental theoretical angle. I come to a conclusion opposite to your conclusion, that is, in my polemic against the present official Party standpoint, which is opposed by practically every member of the

League at the present time. Will it be possible for you to read through the manuscript I send you? Your opinion of it would be greatly appreciated by me.

Also, I must beg to impose upon you again with the request that you assist me—as soon as you can spare the time for it from your work—with replies to the series of questions I sent you in connection with various phases of the history of the Comintern.

Please thank comrade Frank for his letter which I will try to answer soon; the Nin-Trotsky correspondence is to be sent out for discussion to the membership.⁴⁸⁵

PS: I enclose comrade Abern's report on the "German campaign" during the period when the *Militant* appeared three times a week.⁴⁸⁶ It is for your information.



Setting a Date for the Conference

Letter by Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon⁴⁸⁷

16 April 1933

The Gourov letter coming from the International Secretariat—concerning the League internal situation and specifically our coming conference—I assume you will have by the time this letter reaches you. It does not attempt to judge or to characterize the issues involved in the internal conflict; but, as you will notice, it proposes definitely complete collaboration with the International Secretariat on all matters concerning the conference on the basis of joint agreement, including even the question of setting the date. In conformity with this, I wish to present the following motion to the National Committee:

That the conference date be set for September 15; all material, theses, and resolutions to be ready in time to assure a discussion period of at least three months. This date is to be proposed to the International Secretariat for common agreement.

I submit the following motivation, which I ask to have communicated to all NC members:

1. It should be obvious that the conference cannot take place on June 30, if it is to permit for an adequate discussion by the League membership, not to speak of the international sections. The League is facing much greater tasks than hitherto, due to the new perspectives opening up for the International Left Opposition growing out of the defeat in Germany. To the International Left Opposition, this means a turn of orientation in which all of its sections must participate. The League's tasks are already indicated in a measure by its present activities. The League is facing a difficult internal situation which has become a serious obstacle to its further advance.

Both of these problems, external and internal, require for their solution not a speedily organized, but a thoroughly organized, conference, thoroughly prepared theses and resolutions, thorough discussion by the membership, and fully participated in by the other sections of the International Left Opposition.

2. It should be obvious that a conference held in the present atmosphere of factional friction and hostility can bring no solution whatever, but serve only to seriously endanger the unity of the League. And in this proposal for extended time, I also propose that *all the leading comrades* pledge to endeavor to remove all factional frictions and obstacles which are of an organizational and personal character, and to endeavor to conciliate the differences growing out of this basis prior to the conference, in order to guarantee the possibility of objective deliberations and to secure the unity of the League. I propose this extension of time to make possible effective intervention by the International Secretariat if such should be necessary. Revolutionary objectivity and the interest of the League demands that this period of time be allowed for the conference preparations.

* * * * *

Comrade Trotsky has expressed his agreement with my proposal in regard to our perspectives and its expression in our conference material as contained in my letter of April 6 (that section which deals with the question of perspectives).¹⁸⁸ He also wants it understood that the Gourov letter concerning the League internal situation and the coming conference must be viewed in connection with the letters he formerly sent to the League regarding comrade Shachtman's position in the European questions.

As the League representative, I am sending the motion above and motivation direct to the International Secretariat.

The very best regards to all comrades with all due sympathy to the secretary's position.



An Offensive for Unity

Letter by Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon⁴⁸⁹

16 April 1933

This letter was marked "entirely personal."

It is 1:30 at night. Here one always gets to bed about 10:30, but just a couple of lines.

This evening I received your letter and minutes concerning the question of your tour to the Illinois mine fields and the counterproposal by Shachtman-Abern. I discussed it with LD. He says: Yes, that is a blow to the League, but it is the kind of blow which grows out of a bad internal situation. Shachtman by his position can only compromise himself seriously, not only in the League, but also in the international organization.

We discussed my idea for more time and preparation for the coming conference. He says he will write the secretariat again in that sense. He says he will also write Shachtman and Glotzer again personally—and they will be hot letters.

The International Secretariat proposes to invite a representative of the minority to its coming plenum May 6-7. I wrote them, stating my belief that it would be physically impossible, but urged them to extend the invitation.

I propose there should now be an offensive made on the basis of my motion, not particularly the part for postponement, but the proposal for removal of frictions and conciliation of organizational and personal differences to preserve the *unity of the League*. Not just in a backhanded manner to restore some rights taken away by wrong organizational measures, but openly, even admitting what was wrong, and openly and demonstratively leading in the direction of organizational conciliation for the unity of the League—but

uncompromising firmness on political views, and more so when they involve differences. The League situation absolutely demands that, and that is the way to carry a majority for it in a bad factional situation.

Why have you not long ago sent your statement on the Illinois miners question? I have already discussed it with LD, giving my views as distinctly opposed to Shachtman's. He sees clearly the danger of Shachtman's position, but it would have been much better to also have your statement.

I would not mind if you would also make my proposal on perspectives contained in the letter of April 6 known to the NC members, if not to discuss it with the membership in general (not the internal section, that was not written for general consumption).



I Am Not More Favorable to the Minority

Letter by Leon Trotsky to the
International Secretariat⁴⁹⁰

17 April 1933

This letter was also sent to the National Committee of the CLA.

It seemed to you that my letter could be interpreted as being more favorable to the minority than to the majority of the central committee of our American section. If this is your impression, I didn't express myself well. In intervening in this question, my purpose was to totally discount our previous experiences on the international plane (the case of comrade Shachtman) and to follow step by step, without the least prejudice for one side or the other, the development of the internal conflicts and differences in the American section.

It seemed to me—and it still does—that the minority is tremendously overestimating the importance of the national conference, not as the regular political convention of a revolutionary organization, but as a way to solve the internal struggle by forcing a decision through organizational means, i.e., by winning a small majority of only a few votes. In my opinion political wisdom means

understanding that, at the present stage, there is no organizational way of forcing a decision that would favor the development of the organization itself. Quite the contrary, it is necessary to put politics in the forefront and to be careful not to rush things.

It also seemed to me that the majority, as the leading faction in the central committee, showed some impatience and applied or attempted to apply organizational measures that, while not yielding any lasting results, could not help but sharpen the conflict.

I note with satisfaction that the majority has withdrawn on its own initiative one of the measures, which consisted in depriving comrade Abern of his decisive vote in the committee in the absence of comrade Swabeck. And if I understand correctly the meaning of the recent central committee minutes, the minority's reaction seems quite worrisome to me.

What is at stake are our opportunities in the miners federation in Illinois. Cannon is well-known down there and has an authority based in particular on his past trade-union activity. Everything seems to indicate that he was the one who had to go back there in a situation that is rather promising. The continuity of the work under way also demands it. However, the minority opposed it with the candidacy of comrade Shachtman and it is to be feared that the central committee will remain undecided.

Such a measure on the part of the minority could only be justified by deep differences on our work among the miners. My impression is that the minority is not correct in its criticisms. Far from it. They criticize comrade Allard for not sufficiently emphasizing the point of view of the Left Opposition in the trade-union paper of which he is the editor. They criticize comrade Cannon for presenting himself as a representative of progressive workers and not as a representative of the League. I cannot judge whether the first criticism is founded; I read only two issues of the paper in question. In one of them, the editors played up the speech of comrade Cannon quite big, which is of course of great importance for us. It may be that comrade Allard does not utilize all the possibilities; but he was the only one—or at least he was up to very recently. Besides, this is a trade-union paper, the editing of which requires a great deal of tact and caution. The criticism against comrade Cannon appears to me to be dictated by a purely formalistic intransigence. I do not think that comrade Cannon had to present himself as a delegate of the League, the latter being a

political organization. Not much is accomplished through political demonstrations inside of the trade unions; what is important is getting into them, gaining authority within them, working inside, creating a fraction, which in turn must not abuse the name of the League on every occasion, especially not as long as it remains a tiny minority. A mass trade union is not a meeting called by some political organization. Of course, there are no inflexible rules for those things; it is a matter of concrete circumstances. But it seems to me—although, of course, from afar I could be mistaken—that there is a certain spirit of sectarian formalism in the objections of the minority. In any case, these objections do not at all appear to me to be sufficient to prevent Cannon from pursuing this very important work among the miners.

Since I have decided to follow step by step the development of the internal struggle, I am asking you to please not consider this letter as “final.” Its purpose is to supplement the previous letter in the light of new experience.



Shachtman Flounders Between Scholasticism and Softness on Stalinism

Letter by Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon⁴⁹¹

17 April 1933

Today LD wrote a letter to the International Secretariat with copy to the League NC, taking up the issue raised in NC minutes nos. 145 and 146, and other matters.⁴⁹² I have not translated it as I thought it better that the original be sent over. This, I am sure, is a quicker response than you had expected and should help to put the brakes on the irresponsible factional actions. If you had been so prompt in sending your statement on the miners situation, we would have had a more completed picture here and more up-to-date. But you have a very bad habit in certain instances of stalling and delaying, which some day will be your undoing.

Nevertheless LD's letter on that aspect of the question is clear and should be a help in the present situation.

The idea expressed in regard to the conference, I believe, should also exert itself in favor of a different approach. It should strengthen the proposal I submitted in my letter of yesterday. I am certain the League will benefit from that proposal, and feel quite sure it will meet with the approval of the International Secretariat.

On a whole the future course should now appear much clearer. As I mentioned in my personal letter to you yesterday, it is now time to follow a definite strategy which will, when correctly carried out, lead to a correct solution of the internal difficulties, and it will be up to us to carry that out. We must put first on the agenda the question of preserving the unity of the League in the sense of removing all the organizational and personal issues of friction which have led in the opposite direction. In that respect the heaviest demands are upon us, not upon the minority. In other words, to accept openly the criticisms of our measures contained in this letter and continually take such measures which will correct these mistakes of the past. (As a matter of fact, the more that could have been accomplished prior to the arrival of this letter, the better.) That course will be certain to rally a response from the serious elements among our membership. With this course there will be a strong basis prepared upon which to fight out the political issues; where no compromise is made and no quarter is given. The political issues should be pursued relentlessly. As examples we have these two questions of the Red Army and the Illinois miners. I am, of course, quite aware that to the extent they have appeared as issues of dispute, they are episodic. That is, they will not continue to remain issues of dispute, upon which political divisions take place. But nevertheless they are symptomatic and express a certain conception or rather conceptions which exist within the minority group and its allies. They represent in the case of the first question the elements unconsciously conciliatory to Stalinist ideas and practices (Bleeker and Lewit are the best representatives of this element). In the case of the second question, we have the pressure from the scholastic intellectualist tendency, for which important issues are settled academically and not by the live process of the class struggle. When facing the problem of working-class policy, this will work out sectarian. (Our Carterites and half-Carterites represent this tendency.) Shachtman is weak politically and flounders in between both. It is therefore certain that these early symptoms will be repeated and finally find conscious, politi-

cal form and expression unless they are fought effectively. That we can only do on the basis of the idea expressed in the first part of this paragraph.

Another subject: We are informed by our German comrades that they have received news of \$100 being collected in the U.S. for the German Left Opposition, but that sum is being diverted into other purposes. I am convinced that there must be a mistake somewhere in this. Perhaps they are alluding to the announcement in the *Militant* of the \$100 collected in the New York meeting. But if it should not be a mistake, then I fear it can become an international scandal. In any case we must find means of collecting funds for the German LO. The comrades have gigantic possibilities, but are so poverty-stricken that it is almost impossible to issue *Unser Wort*, although the success of the mere fact of our having a paper, of revolutionary literature penetrating Germany, almost amounts to a sensation. I know the financial condition of the League. I know your heavy job in the matter. But we must undertake a campaign in such a way that we do not sink ourselves, even though the most favorable moment therefore is already past.

Yes, and another money question, although that will perhaps be in this case a matter of ex post facto, the \$75 which you so kindly informed me about. I expect to have to leave any day for the antifascist congress. Will it have to mean taxing LD's at present very slender resources? He says I must get there, particularly now that we expect it in Copenhagen.⁴⁹³ I agree. But if I get there I am compelled to remain until funds are available to proceed. I cannot think of staying in France not knowing how long it will last. It is too expensive. But I should be there for the plenum meeting May 6 and 7 and then be able to return to the U.S.⁴⁹⁴ So here is hoping you can say when you receive this, "alles erledigt" [all taken care of].

The very best regards to all the stalwarts, from the top down the line.

PS: I am enclosing LD's letter herewith.



We Will Not Suspend Our Fight

Letter by Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer⁴⁹⁵

17 April 1933

The enclosed is self-explanatory. I have already sent a copy to Maurice whom it seems impossible to arouse from silence; I am, however, not entirely without hope. Naturally, the comrades here discussed LD's letters and nobody is alarmed over them; there is no need to be. He is unmistakably concerned primarily with the danger of a split without political physiognomy, as he puts it. That there is such a danger is incontestable. Only it does not emanate from us. The fact is that in cold reality we are a majority in the League and majorities are not in the habit of splitting. This is not to say that Cannon could not, if he were so determined, get a majority at the conference. He has already indicated this, and how he intends to get it: four, five, or six "members" in Kansas City; disfranchisement of Toronto (will he dare to go through with it?); and I am told that the Minneapolis branch is raking the cemeteries and exhuming several corpses, who are promptly registered on the branch books without a flicker of the eyelash. (Votaw was recently reinstated, without even a probationary period, although he has been dead as Moses for two to three years! Just watch: The branch, which has an average attendance of seven to nine members, will claim no less than 30 when the conference rolls around. Cannon moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform!)

LD's letter is of course deliberately ambiguous on many respects. If he means what I hope he means, well and good. If he has the idea that it is possible for us to suspend the fight against Cannon's policies and methods in the League, I'm afraid he'll have to count me out of his calculations. I didn't start the fight as a pastime to be dropped at a signal.

Now a few other points, very briefly: The miners situation: Cannon has not yet presented his counter-motion, although it was due long ago. His speech in the New York branch, however, was a model of opportunism. All the arguments, comma for comma, of

the French right wing (Rosmer) in the trade-union question, were repeated by him, even if not so literally. As for Allard, it was rather astounding. He delivered a peroration for Allard, a heated defense of him, "a sterling militant in the thick of the fight," and declared that *he would propose him for the National Committee at the next conference so as to bring him closer to us!* Nothing less. Since then, Allard has written a signed statement for the *Progressive Miner* about the "slandorous charge" that he was a member of the national executive of the Communist Party. The statement is horrible.

You are required to vote on the two sets of motions introduced in the committee recently. The Cannon caucus has already voted the ticket straight, including Coover. I hope you and John find it possible to vote immediately. The motions are clear enough, it seems to me.

I am too rushed to write much more. But if you will forgive me for the delay in typing this reply, I promise you an extensive letter in a few days. I hope I can get to Chicago soon.



Allard Must Take a Stand Against Redbaiting

by James P. Cannon⁴⁹⁶

19 April 1933

Cannon submitted this resolution to the April 19 resident committee meeting, where Shachtman and Abern submitted their own motion. With only these three NC members in attendance, the committee adopted both resolutions as "noncontradictory" and decided to send Cannon's motion to Allard and to enlist Oehler to take the matter up with him directly. Copies were sent to Glotzer, Edwards, and Angelo so that they could also put pressure on Allard.

The business unionists had by this time gained the upper hand in the PMA. Having negotiated a new, two-year contract not fundamentally different from that of the Lewis UMW, the PMA leadership followed the coal bosses in opposing militant defense efforts for the Taylorville miners and in joining a growing redbaiting campaign against PMA leftists. The Taylorville Breeze singled out Allard for attack as a member

of the Communist Opposition in an article headlined "Allard Speaks to Communists." Allard's denial of Communist Party membership was published in the 14 April *Progressive Miner*.⁴⁹⁷

1. The attack on Allard as a Communist by the *Taylorville Breeze* and other organs of the big coal interests is a part of the general campaign of reaction against the Progressive Miners Union. The object of the "Red Scare" is to discredit the union before public opinion and thus to prepare the ground for more terroristic aggression; to intimidate the membership and consolidate the conservative right wing in the union; and to drive the official leadership of the union at a faster pace on the path of conservatizing the union.

2. The policy of the leadership in this question as indicated in the statement of president Percy supplements and aids the campaign of reaction and prepares the way for a red hunt inside the union—one of the most important prerequisites for the disorganization of the union and the paralysis of the fighting capacity. In this the leadership is only taking another step on the rightist path they have been treading. In the circumstances, the disavowal of Communism, without an assertion of the right of Communists to belong to the union and participate in its leadership, is, in reality, an acknowledgment of the *promise* of the reactionary attack and a capitulation to it.

3. The statement of comrade Allard in the same issue of the *Progressive Miner* (April 14) only rounds out, supplements, and completes the strategy of the reactionary press and the union leadership. In general and especially in the concrete circumstances, the reply of comrade Allard to the reactionary provocation is a false one. The statement of comrade Allard in no way fulfills his obligations as a Communist and a member of the Left Opposition. From the standpoint of protecting the union from a reactionary attack the "strategy" is of no use and serves an opposite purpose. Comrade Allard's denial of formal membership in the CP is at best an unworthy subterfuge, for the issue raised is the issue of Communism. He cannot now evade a frank reply to this charge. His failure to defend his position as a Communist and to couple his criticism of the Stalinist Party with an open declaration of his own adherence to the Left Opposition compromises him before the movement and deals a blow to the union, to the

left wing, and to the League. An immediate correction of this action is imperative.

4. The strategy of denying or concealing one's Communist affiliations, sometimes resorted to in order to retain contact with the masses in reactionary organizations, has no application in this case. The PMA is the product of a miners revolt. Its preservation and further development depends on a sustained militant policy which is impossible without a free participation of Communists in the union. The progressive character of the union, which has distinguished it from the Lewis UMW, cannot be maintained if it permits the hounding of Communists. At the present stage this is precisely the crux of the problem of the PMA. An open fight for the right of Communists to participate in the union is the only way to counter the attack of the reactionary press. Those who do not support that right are already traveling the road toward betrayal of the miners movement and reconciliation with the class enemy and eventually with the Lewis union. Those who surrender the right by implication, by denials, and futile subterfuges, as comrade Allard does in his statement, serve as conscious or unconscious supporters of this betrayal.

The NC, in the interest of the union and the Communist cause, deems it absolutely necessary now to demand of comrade Allard a clarification of his position and a correction of his previous action in the sense of the NC letter sent to him under date of April 10.⁴⁹⁸ Specifically, the NC insists on the following:

1. A signed statement by comrade Allard in the next issue of the *Progressive Miner* in which he clearly states his position as a Communist and a member of the Left Opposition and points out that his criticism of the official CP has nothing in common with the attacks of the class enemy against the Party.
2. In this statement comrade Allard should point out the real significance of the attack on him as a Communist, declare that he faces the issue squarely and is ready to take the full consequences of his stand, as a stand for the interest of the workers in their union.
3. These actions must be taken at once. Otherwise the League will be compelled to express itself publicly on his actions and to sever relations with him.

Allard Discredits Left Opposition

by Martin Abern and Max Shachtman SM

19 April 1933

This resolution was submitted to the April 19 resident committee meeting and adopted with Cannon's motion.

The National Committee condemns the statement of comrade Allard in the current issue of the *Progressive Miner* as a capitulation unworthy of a Communist and in violation of the elementary principles of the Left Opposition. Confronted with the charge that he is a Communist and a member of the Party or of the Left Opposition, a charge made by agents of the coal operators in the public press, comrade Allard, with the opportunity available to him of making a personal declaration in the columns of the *Progressive Miner*, has issued a statement which violently denies the "lie" that he is a member of the national committee of the Communist Party. This statement is supplemented by his Collinsville speech, published elsewhere in the same issue of the paper, where he also denies being a member of the national committee of the Communist League. This worthless subterfuge which takes refuge in "pure truth" (for Allard is not, to be sure, a member of the national committee of either the Party or the Opposition) is aimed to conceal the fact that Allard is a Communist or a *member* of the Communist League. Nowhere in the statement does comrade Allard take occasion to mention by even one word or even to imply that he is a Communist or a member or supporter of the Left Opposition. Instead of taking advantage of the stool pigeon's charges of membership in the national committee of the Party or the Opposition, to point out that he is a Communist Oppositionist; to point out wherein the Left Opposition—on even so narrow a scale as the miners question—differs from the official Party standpoint; to point out that the charge is part of the coal operator/right-wing alliance in the union to start an "anti-red" drive against all militants and class-conscious fighters, Allard has resorted to a miserable "stratagem," beneath the dignity of an active and prominent Communist. His

statement, far from meeting the elementary requirements of the situation, can do nothing but leave the impression with the miners that he is *not* a Communist, although he is quite ready to entertain a “liberal” attitude toward “all tendencies and groups” in the labor movement.

The statement of Allard, which is so shrewdly seconded by the statement of the president of the PMA, Percy, can no longer be considered as falling within the category of “partial errors” or isolated, casual blunders due to inexperience. It comes after a series of less tragic but no less significant blunders on his part. Comrade Allard’s editorship of the *Progressive Miner* has never been in accord with the requirements of a Communist or a member of the Left Opposition. His conduct as a leading member of the PMA has never been in accord with our fundamental standpoint or our tactical orientation, being at all times an evasive and ambiguous veering between a semi-Communist and semireformist position. The latest statement by him is only the culmination of a long series of lesser mistakes of an impermissible nature which the National Committee of the League has sought to warn him against and rectify. Instead of adopting the course urged upon him, not only in the interests of the Left Opposition per se, but in a broader sense, in the interests of the progressive miners movement in general and in the interests of the advancement of a left-wing miners movement in particular—comrade Allard has pursued a policy which could only discredit and compromise him and the Left Opposition of which he is a member.

In view of all these facts, the National Committee feels impelled to demand of comrade Allard an immediate rectification of his statement in the columns of the *Progressive Miner*, in which he shall make clear his political position in face of the challenge of the coal operators and their right-wing allies in the union. It is necessary for comrade Allard to state his membership in the LO, to distinguish himself as such from the policies of Stalinism, to defend his right and the right of any other member of the PMA to belong to any political organization, Opposition, official Communist Party, socialists, Republicans, Democrats—and to defend his views within the confines of the democratic framework of the union; above all, to explain in a more correct manner the significance of the attack of the stool pigeons, not merely as an “anti-red” movement per se, but *essentially an attack upon the progressive miners*

movement as a whole. He must point out that the LO has no interests separate and apart from the interests of the miners in general and the PMA in particular; that the Opposition supports the PMA and has at all times assisted it in the most fraternal manner—giving his own activities for the miners as the best example.

If comrade Allard fails to act in the manner prescribed above, it will be necessary for the Communist League to come to an immediate and conclusive break with him.

On the basis of this decision and in line with the contents of it, a statement is to appear on the case of comrade Allard in the very next issue of the *Militant*. The decision, further, is to be communicated immediately to all branches, to all NC members, especially to comrades Oehler, Glotzer, and Edwards, and a copy sent immediately to comrade Allard and comrade Angelo.



A Cold Douche

Letter by Maurice Spector to Max Shachtman⁵⁰⁰

24 April 1933

The Trotsky correspondence is a cold douche, nicht wahr [isn't it]? Clearly LD regards the now voluminous statements and memorials of both sides as a tempest in a teapot. He is of course correct when he suggests that a split at this time would be unintelligible. We have been aware of this all along. But it is a pity that the onus is not placed where it rightly belongs. C is a type the Old Man would better appraise under personal observation. Prinkipo could contribute greatly toward clarification at the coming conference, if it could see with us that the regime in the League is all-important and if it rejected once and for all the C-S "constructions" of "Navillism-Landauism," etc. Failing that, I cannot say that I expect overly much from the conference decisions, except a protraction of the struggle. Your position on the Negro question will be exploited demagogically and factionally to our disadvantage. All one can do is to continue the main course of our policy, posing questions and issues objectively and in a Bolshevik-Leninist spirit.

Our “campaign,” I am afraid, against the Swabeck trip was too extensive and did not add to our prestige. I voted for and induced the branch to support your views, but my enthusiasm was a bit damp. We must learn to select our terrain more skillfully.

What do you know of the surrounding circumstances of Trotsky’s “Tragedy of the German Proletariat”? You spoke on the subject in New York. Who is to take the initiative for the new party, and does this mean a new party at last, or the old party without Stalinist leadership? I don’t see *Unser Wort*, but have you any better idea of what the Germans mean when they urge the Russian Opposition to apply the lessons to the USSR—what does the “4th of August of Stalinism” mean?⁵⁰¹



Our Group Must Not Dissolve

Letter by Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer⁵⁰²

1 May 1933

Shachtman wrote this analysis of Trotsky’s 7 March 1933 letter to the I.S., “On the Situation in the American League,” on board the Ile de France en route to the ILO plenum in Paris.

You are probably aware by now of the reasons which made my departure for Europe such a hasty one. There was so little time left between the receipt of the invitation from the secretariat for the minority to send a representative to the plenum and the last sailing day which would permit my arrival at the plenum in time that it was impossible to inform all the comrades of the decision or to consult with those who are out of town. Every minute of the scant hours at my disposal was consumed with cleaning away loose ends and making the necessary preparations. Still, we did manage to find a few hours in which the New York comrades discussed the situation, particularly in connection with the Gourov letter. Although it did not appear to be the case at first, we soon discovered that we had a fairly unanimous estimation of the significance of the letter and the attitude which our comrades everywhere should have toward it. I want to take advantage of the

enforced leisure of steamship traveling to set down the views which I believe all our active New York comrades hold in common. That these observations center around the Gourov letter is only natural in view of the fact that the internal life of the League in the coming period will have the same center of gravity, so to say.

1. With the exception of two points, we can express our hearty agreement with the Gourov letter; we could not have expected, considering the position of its author, that it be written in a very much different manner. The two points are: a. the direct implication that our group is equally responsible with the Cannon group for the present situation in the League; b. the estimation of the role and significance of the "conciliatory tendency." I will deal with each of these points separately later on. For the moment, let us confine our attention to other aspects of the letter.

2. The analysis of the situation, while not exhaustive, is far from being in conflict with what we have said in the past. Quite the contrary, it is in direct accordance with it; in fact, there are whole passages in the Gourov letter which are identical, in spirit and sometimes in letter, with what we wrote almost eleven months ago to the day, in our statement "The Situation in the American League: Prospect and Retrospect." From the latter document, I want to make a few extracts which you can compare, with striking results, with identical declarations made in the Gourov letter:

An organization of our kind, separated from the main current of the class struggle by the powerful Stalinist apparatus and other factors, constantly threatened with isolation, ingrowth, and circle spirit, tends to have its inevitable frictions develop on various questions and to become increasingly acute.

(See point no. 1 in Gourov letter.)

On the danger of a split, which Gourov emphasizes, as well as he does the fact that it would be of a purely "anticipatory," "premature" nature, we wrote as early as June 1932:

The prospects we have will vanish quicker than they arose, if we do not eliminate the threat of a split which hangs over the head of the organization. We do not ground our opposition to a split on sentiment. A split is inevitable and sometimes even desirable if there exist irreconcilable differences on fundamental questions of principle or if, in general, one of the conflicting tendencies represents an alien current in the movement. We do not believe this to be the case in the present dispute.

Gourov points out the possibility of “principled differences in embryonic form” existing in the League fight. What did we have to say on this score a year ago? Let me quote a couple of excerpts from the same document:

We believe that the possibilities for the unification of the League and its advancement still exist and we must not allow them to be destroyed for factional reasons. We cannot hope to change the personal relations of comrades involved by the adoption of a decree. But there still exists sufficient community of basic political views to make possible the collaboration required to continue the work of the Opposition. The task to be accomplished immediately is to reestablish the unity of the committee and the League as a whole on this “minimum basis.” The joint work in the future, the consideration of broad political problems that we must take up in increasing measure, the events themselves will reveal in time what is not yet fully ascertainable at the present moment: Either the present conflict is the result of personal antagonisms, petty frictions magnified by the circle atmosphere under which we still live in part, or inevitable secondary differences on questions of policy which have no fundamental importance or significance and can be straightened out in the course of the work. Or the present conflict bears concealed within itself *half-formed, still unclear, but nevertheless fundamental differences which only await further development, a collision with an important political problem or problems, to appear in their full light and magnitude*. It cannot yet be said definitely and conclusively which of these alternatives is correct. *Time will offer the test and the test can best be made under the conditions of unity.*

And again, further on:

We want to underline our belief that measures can still be taken to prevent a destructive factional struggle. What we have said above concerning the possibilities of a “minimum collaboration and unity,” and our desire *to allow the passage of time and events to test out clearly and to the end any deeper political and principled differences that may exist in embryonic form today* should be borne in mind.

In two words, Gourov proposes intensification of mass work and drawing of new elements into the leadership. At a time when nobody in the League was even talking about “mass work”—that is, before it became fashionable, before Trotsky began to emphasize it persistently—we said in our document in connection with the immediate problem before the League, as raised by the internal situation:

How should the League arm itself for the coming period? It must undertake a general tightening of its ranks. It must not only engage in greater activities in general, but above all the League must turn

its eyes and efforts toward an increased direct participation in the class struggle. Our small numbers put definite limits to this work, but we have conducted a sufficient propaganda training in our ranks to enable us to make a serious beginning in initiating movements on our own responsibility. (We have in mind particularly the movement in Minneapolis, in the Illinois coalfields, and in New York.)

And further:

Not only should the National Committee change its manner of work, but, like the League as a whole, it must be broadened. Its narrow, exclusive base must be extended considerably to embrace the collaboration of new elements, drawing in new forces particularly from among those outside the ranks of the old Cannon group in the Party.

What kind of forces? Supporters of one faction or the other? Not necessarily. As we pointed out in connection with an elucidation of the Second National Conference dispute over the National Committee's composition—where we were a million percent right and Cannon a million percent wrong:

We would go still further and say that even had all the charges made by Cannon against Lewit, or any other comrade who was generally qualified for membership on the committee, held true, even if such a comrade held differing views on certain questions and was critical of any member of the committee or of *the committee as a whole*—even if this were so, we find in it no reason for opposing him as a member. *The Opposition has no need of such a spurious and strangulating "monolithism"; it will concur in it only to its own detriment.*

* * * * *

I think enough has been quoted to indicate the essential harmony between our position, reiterated often enough since it was first set down a year ago, and the position sketchily outlined in the Gourov letter.

3. Now wherein does the analysis harmonize with that of the Cannon faction? The answer is that it doesn't harmonize in any respect whatsoever. It is the most crushing destruction of the whole factional edifice of the Cannon group that could be imagined. This edifice has been in the process of construction for almost two years now, painstakingly filled out brick by brick, ardently and violently defended by Cannon and his faction. What were its foundation stones?

The Cannon group represents the revolutionary kernel in the League; the minority represents the petty-bourgeois kernel. The struggle between them is based upon decisive fundamental ques-

tions. The Cannon group is the principled group; the minority is unprincipled. In the Cannon group, there is complete and absolute agreement on every single question; in the minority there is not 100 percent agreement on every question. The Cannon group is the homogenous group; the minority represents a heterogeneous group, an unprincipled bloc. Look again at our internal bulletins and you will see these comparisons presented and defended ad nauseam. The Gourov letter blows all these pretensions into a cocked hat. It brushes them aside; it ignores them; it explicitly rejects them—in a word, it does everything that a brief letter can do to *demolish completely* the whole faction structure of the Cannon group.

The so-called “conciliators,” whom the Cannonites treated with such supercilious contempt, whom they bullyragged and bulldozed, whom they so systematically alienated, whom they disdainfully described as “people whose heads are not shaped in such a way as to make it possible for them to assimilate Communist ideas” (Cannon to Oehler last year)—these elements Gourov describes as a healthy factor in the situation, who, under the circumstances, must be supported by the international Opposition.

The organizational maneuvers of Cannon—those ultrafactional co-optations which he proposed and defended as arch-Bolshevist, the removal of Marty from resident committee vote, etc., etc.—Gourov sees as “one of the worst traits of bureaucratism” and proposes in point no. 10d that “the central committee should abstain from artificial organizational manipulations within its own body which bear a factional character.”

The aristocratic claims to heredity in leadership—running through every declaration of Cannon, from his gestation theory down to his letter to Oehler and since then—is dismissed by Gourov with the proposal that the faction majority now enjoyed in the NC by the Cannon group should be taken from it by the membership at the coming convention (point no. 8).

It may be said: This applies equally to both groups. I contest that. We never made the claims of the Cannon group and cannot, consequently, be similarly affected.

The minority (we wrote on 3 January 1933 in our postplenum discussion statement) lays no claim to any factional, hidebound “homogeneity” or to the title of “Marxian trunk” or “revolutionary kernel” or “Bolshevik group” of the League—claims which have driven the Cannon group blindly along that course which alienates

from it increasing numbers of League members. We do, however, assert our ability to collaborate in the work of the League in a comradely manner even with those members with whom we are in disagreement on this or that question, so long as those differences do not extend to the fundamental doctrines of the Opposition. The lack of this ability in the Cannon group, in the mind of which a verbal "intransigence" and "principledness" covers up factional violations of many of the practices and methods which are the distinct attributes of the Left Opposition in the Communist movement, has forced this group into most of its untenable positions and arguments.

If you read over the seven proposals under point no. 10, you will find that we can agree with every one of them without difficulty. And that includes, as I shall try to explain further on, the proposal that neither of the present two factions shall be given a majority at the coming national conference, that is, in the coming National Committee.

4. The Gourov letter proceeds from the following premise: A split is imminent in the League; there is no other way out in the present situation and with the present relationship of forces; a split without clearly defined or discernible principled differences would be, as Trotsky wrote in his letter to you, a "miscarriage that would kill the mother as well as the child," reducing both groups to impotence. A new element must therefore be introduced into the situation, changing the relationship of forces, the directional flow of the struggle, its outcome, etc. This element is the group of conciliators, whose organization is inevitable. From my point of view, it is not merely inevitable but beneficial.

Is there a danger of a split? Essentially, yes. As matters now stand, the conference would divide on the question of mandates. Cannon would like to disenfranchise Toronto, for example, to give about 30 members to Minneapolis and five to Kansas City. Would we challenge that? Of course. The outcome of such a fight is not hard to see.

Cannon is, in my opinion, in a desperate position. He is in a minority in the League, even though our faction, *as a faction*, is not in the unmistakable majority. According to the Gourov letter, Cannon's faction hegemony of the National Committee is a pernicious factor which must be eliminated. What Cannon's perspective in connection with a split has been in the past we know but too well. You remember his letter to Oehler last year in which

he pointed out that should his faction be the minority at the coming conference, the League "would disappear" and the minority (i.e., Cannon) would "start all over again." This split perspective did not originate then. Recently, I chanced to come across a letter written in *September 1931* by Jack Carmody, then on his road to becoming a Cannonite but not yet convinced of the "gestation theory," to another Cannonite, Sam Gordon. Remember that this was written before it was discovered that "Shachtman is a Navillist and Landauist," before "differences on the international question" were ever heard of. Carmody writes literally as follows:

I have had a chat with Jim and in my opinion luckily we had had some beer over our conversation. I told him what was developing and he seemed to treat it lightly, only on the question of the Cannon group. Granting that the Cannon group developed into the American section of the International Left, that is no reason why we should still be known as the Cannon group, even though acknowledging Jim as leader of the American section of the international Opposition. From our conversation, it seemed that Jim would not budge, then he posed the question this way—If the branch repudiates the Cannon group, "I'm through!"

Here all comment is indeed superfluous!

Now, how is a split to be avoided? I do not think Gourov could have made any proposal other than the one he does make. This brings me to the two points which I referred to at the outset as being subject to disagreement on our part.

5. The main point of disagreement I have with the Gourov letter is that to all intents and purposes it puts our group on the same plane as the Cannon faction. I do not believe this is warranted by the situation. The abuses which led to the present dangerous situation in the League are precisely the ones we fought against. I will not elaborate on this score here. There only remains for me to explain the whole situation over again to the I.S. and to comrade Trotsky.

The only other point is not so much a matter of disagreement as it is of interpretation and elucidation. I refer to the "conciliators." Now, I do not, of course, agree at all with Gourov's exaggeration of their numbers and strength. These elements are far from a majority in the League; they are not—at least they have not been up to now—a considerable number. But that is not the important question, for if they have not been, that does not mean to say that in the coming period they will not be. On the contrary, there is

every reason to believe that they are going to be a very important factor.

The important thing is to establish: Who are the conciliatory elements? I have a definition which excludes some elements. For example, among elements who "do not belong to either of the two groups"—I exclude all Weisbordites. There are two or three in the New York branch—like Pappas and Kaldis. They are not conciliatory elements—they are the agents of a *faction*, the Weisbord faction. To my mind, all their line of conduct and affiliation—even though it does not and, so far as we were concerned, has not excluded collaboration with them in the League—does exclude them from the category referred to by comrade Gourov.

Now if such a category does exist at all, then it exists in its clearest and most tangible form in the New York branch, with similar phenomena, perhaps not so clearly developed, in other branches. This element has *not* abstained from the factional struggle, it is true (there is not a single member in the League who has); but neither is it affiliated with any of the two factions. That is, it is not bound by a group or faction. I refer to such elements as George Saul, Bill Matheson, Albert Orland, Chubby Geltman, and others who are, to a certain degree, different with the different comrades, what Gourov describes as "solid comrades, possessing authority, not having engaged in the struggle of the two groups, and capable of bringing about a healthier atmosphere inside the central committee."

This does not mean that these comrades have not shown certain sympathies in the internal disputes. They have. And it is significant to note: *All* the strength of the Cannon faction is concentrated in its *faction*, which is a hidebound aggregate of caucus men. Outside of its ranks, it has no sympathizers. Most of our strength, or a good deal of it, comes from comrades who are not in our faction. Take New York, for instance: Is it an accident that practically every single one of the so-called conciliatory elements has come to the point of supporting us on virtually every disputed question? Is it an accident that Cannon has succeeded in antagonizing and driving away every one of them, one after another? Is it not a fact that, even in such a question as the election of the branch executive committee, the victory of our slate was made possible by the practically unbroken support given it by virtually every one of the comrades in the branch who is not organized in

one faction or another? Take even Carter: He has tried so hard—and in the future he will probably try much harder—to form a separate group and to follow an “independent line.” Yet on every concrete question he has found himself compelled to support our point of view. And after all, isn’t much the same situation to be found in Chicago? There the branch majority has pretty steadily supported our point of view on disputed questions, yet only two or three of our comrades can be considered as members of the faction. This feature of the internal dispute, far from being a source of weakness, is to my mind a source of strength. This is a fact which is being revealed particularly in the light of the Gourov letter.

Now, these conciliatory elements are going to unite into some sort of loose group formation—of that there is not the slightest doubt in my mind. The Gourov letter is a direct and open appeal to them to unite. We have nothing to fear from such a development. If we do not have a *narrow, myopic, factional* approach, but a *broad, political* approach, we will not look upon these elements like some petty shopkeeper does at a trade rival who is opening up a place down the street. It is as friends, as allies, as comrades, that we can regard these elements. And I mean it exclusively from the political standpoint: We have never found any difficulty in the past in standing on common ground with these elements; why should matters be different in the future—*provided* we pursue the same methods and policies, even more intelligently, as we pursued before.

Does that mean we immediately dissolve our group? Ridiculous. Groups are not made to order or unmade by decree. Our group will dissolve when the causes which produced it disappear or when it merges into a better group. Quite objectively, I consider the maintenance of our group necessary at the present time, for without it, there would not be a systematic, coherent, cohesive, vigorous line of policy presented to the League.

But you give up the fight for a majority of the National Committee? Not in the least! As I look at it, the Gourov proposals make it possible for the groups to conduct a *Communist* struggle for leadership. Let us look at the mechanics of it, and that frequently simplifies a problem even if it does not exhaust it. At the next conference, the Cannon group gets three members on the committee, we get three, the conciliatory elements get five (the figures are arbitrary, you understand). Now, which of the two “extreme” groups will the conciliatory members of the committee

support? That depends, does it not, essentially upon the superiority of the policy and methods and abilities of the two groups. But these are precisely the fields upon which we should be more than ready to meet the Cannon faction. If we are afraid to measure our policies and abilities against the other faction's, we have no right to demand leadership or fight for it, for we have acknowledged that another group, and not ours, is entitled to it. As for myself, I look forward to the prospect with the same confidence I had when I was confronted with the question of the relationships between ourselves and the conciliatory elements in the New York branch fight.

There are many other points that might be dealt with, but these I believe to be the most important ones. In the brief couple of days that were available between the receipt of the Gourov letter and my departure, I did not hesitate to discuss the whole problem with every comrade I could reach. It is gratifying as well as surprising to find so much agreement as I did find, outside our group as well as inside. You should carry on the same discussions and with as many comrades as you can get hold of. We have no need of concealing our point of view. I will express it thus to the comrades abroad; you should have no hesitation in expressing it to the comrades with whom you speak. That is, if you and the other Chicago comrades find yourselves substantially in agreement with the viewpoint as outlined above. As I see it, no other viewpoint, except a self-contradictory one, is conceivable.

PS: Two points occur to me: a. In fighting Cannon's co-optations, I said we would prefer, if nominations were in order, instead of three intellectuals, two of them newcomers, workers like Lewit, Bleeker, Orland, Saul. Our "nominations" at that time included two who were *not* in our faction. b. In the New York branch elections, we had a fight with the Cannon group which presented a solid slate. Our slate included two "conciliators"—Petras and Saul, and eventually, with the aid of our comrades, another, Orland, was elected. As can be seen, it is not a break with the past line of the group that is needed, but an even further and bolder development of it.

The European Sections Will Not Support You

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman⁵⁰³

1 May 1933

1. I am enclosing a letter to comrade Sara Weber with the request that you forward it immediately. The matter is very important and urgent.⁵⁰⁴

2. The question of the American conference worries all leading European comrades, primarily from the same standpoint that I attempted to formulate in my official letter. But some comrades are of the opinion that your faction is heterogeneous, as is usually always the case in young oppositional groups. You must, dear friend, have no illusions on the question of the distribution of sympathies in Europe: Your faction will have the sympathies of the Spanish comrades and the splinter groups. Basing themselves on previous experience, all of our sections will tend to support the Cannon group. I am trying to remain as impartial as at all possible. Thus I have already been accused, falsely in any case, of indirectly supporting the Shachtman group. Do not have any illusions in this regard. I repeat: At the present stage of the internal American struggle, i.e., when decisive political questions have not yet come to the fore, your group will, in the eyes of all of our sections, have to shoulder the responsibility for a possible split as well as for the drawn-out internal struggle. Without wanting to, you carry a certain heavy political legacy around with you in Europe: Every group we have had to combat here has invoked Shachtman, and for all sections your name has become symbolic in this regard. I do not mean to say that this is correct. If I were of that opinion, I would not oppose with all my might the intensification of the struggle and the prospect of a split, for I know that the individual tendencies and groupings molt and change greatly.

3. On the trade-union question your position seems to me to be formalistic. We struggled bitterly with Gourget in France not because he wanted to adapt to the trade-union milieu, but because he did not want to subordinate his own activity to the Ligue's

control; the kind of adaptation must be determined not individually but collectively. The point is not to unfurl our "flag" in the trade unions once or twice, and perhaps precisely for this reason to disappear from them, but rather to gradually win points of support through which we will gain the possibility of unfurling our flag fully. The fact that you wanted to prevent Cannon's recent trip to Illinois seems to me completely wrong, even from the standpoint of your factional struggle.

4. My opinion on the Negro question is completely hypothetical in character. I know very little about it and am always ready to learn; I will read your manuscript with great interest.

5. I will answer the questions you ask regarding the history of the Comintern as soon as I can. That is unfortunately not possible now, since I have other things to do which absolutely can't be postponed.



International Consultation Is Key

Letter by Arne Swabeck to James P. Cannon⁵⁰⁵

12 May 1933

While in Paris, where he attended the May I.S. plenum, Swabeck received Cannon's long-delayed response to Shachtman's 24 February 1933 resolution on the PMA, and wrote the following letter to Cannon in reply. Never formally submitted to the resident committee, Cannon's lengthy resolution insisted:

The PMA is not only an insurgent movement, but in addition to that it is a mass trade-union organization of considerable weight and of great strategical importance in the whole labor movement. This fact—and it is no small fact—renders completely futile any idea of a quick or definitive solution to problems. Likewise it excludes the application of a partial policy designed for an episodic situation which could either be solved or withdrawn from. No, in the PMA, by virtue of our connections already with it, and our attitude toward it, we are inside the trade-union movement, we are bound up with it, and we bear a certain responsibility for it which we cannot throw off. In this situation the whole

trade-union policy of the Left Opposition is put to a new test and must work out over an extended period of time....A correct policy on our part imperatively demands that we see this movement as it is, and not merely the distorted reflections of it in the leadership...

The defects of the resolution of comrade Shachtman derive from the fact that it is a factional document worked up to serve the purposes of the internal struggle in the League, and deals with a miners movement only superficially and abstractly. Taken altogether, this resolution is not a program for the penetration of the miners movement, but for a retreat from its realities and concrete peculiarities with a series of formal literary gestures. With the Shachtman resolution as its guiding line, the League could retire from the difficult situation "with honor" and with a few points scored against factional opponents in the League. For participation in the miners' struggle itself, the resolution cannot serve.

Much that is contained in the resolution is formally irreproachable. ABC principles retain their validity under all circumstances. The reference to the perspectives of the new union, the contradictions that will assail it in its further course, the inadequacy of any policy but that of class struggle—all this remains correct, even though it was said before, and many times, by others. Where the resolution fails is in its estimate of the membership of the new union, of the degree of definite crystallization of the conflicting tendencies, and of the tempo of the internal union development. And this is precisely the crux of the Illinois problem, insofar as it is a concrete special problem and not an abstract question of trade unionism in general.

The attempt to discover a "deviation" in the fact that Cannon spoke at the Gillespie conference, not formally as a representative of the League but of a group of left-wing trade unionists, is simply comical. Confronted with a ruling of the arrangements committee against the admission of political organizations to the conference, Cannon, according to this reasoning, should have stood aside from the trade-union conference. By that he would have avoided making an "enormous error," and he would also have avoided an opportunity to come into contact with several hundred trade unionists and to explain to them our ideas on a crucial problem of the trade-union movement, which they had assembled to consider.⁵⁰⁶

Today I received your statement on the Illinois miners question. Its general contents correspond with what I had already expressed as my opinion to LD in opposition to the Shachtman resolution and with which LD was in accord. He expressed the opinion that Shachtman's "intransigence" in this general problem was entirely misplaced and could not correspond to the live process of union development and its requirements of a Communist policy.

He said: If Shachtman, based upon the Gourget experience, hopes by this "intransigence" to win the sympathy of the international movement, then that records only another miscalculation. LD expressed the opinion that it is particularly toward such problems as the miners movement that we must guard against a policy which will signify sectarianism. According to his impression, the Shachtman resolution tended in that direction. But LD also thought that he had already said enough to indicate his opinion for the time being in his recent letter on the American League, addressed to the secretariat.

In this connection, a piece of good advice. We should adopt a method, to be religiously adhered to, of always and constantly discussing all our problems with the comrades here, with LD, and with the secretariat. The importance of the latter body will only increase as it assumes more of the character of an international leadership in reality. These comrades are all keenly interested in our problems and our developments, recognize our particularly grand perspectives, and want to be of much more active and direct assistance. It was a mistake on our part not to keep such intimate contact in the past. I can assure you that many letters arrived from the other comrades—and what letters—not the kind that discussed problems in a political manner. This, of course, does not even benefit these comrades; it not merely replaces organizational relations with purely personal ones, but the effect is a harmful impression of what our League is like. Well, we need not aim to prevent that kind of personal writing, but we must hence maintain the proper relations and contacts.

I have, of course, not received the promised long letter. I therefore do not know directly to what extent the views I have expressed and the proposals I have made are acceptable. I have to assume they are. I know they are correct. Tomorrow begins the plenum (with a week's delay), and I do not suppose the letter will catch me. Perhaps it will be of considerable service for me to be able to read it upon my return?

Comrade Shachtman is here now. He has an opportunity now to make good to the extent of changing his ways. He will not be able to fully restore the confidence he enjoyed some time ago until after a period of new tests successfully met on his part. If he fails to change his orientation now, he will be politically repudiated. It is very clear the comrades are all in deadly earnest about that.

But naturally what they want is not a vanquishing but an honest agreement. Max seems to have a feeling of this, and appears to be disposed to come to an agreement. I will assist him in this respect. Our relations are very cordial. Naturally as a basis for an agreement, I am not making any organizational demands, except those which are of a mutual character.

The secretariat has decided that I must proceed to Copenhagen to endeavor to take up work preparatory to the antifascist congress. Yet we are not certain that it actually will take place; that is, it may be prohibited there also. But in any event, the preparatory work must be done there, unless we receive notice to the contrary before my planned departure from Paris. The additional expenses which this involves, it appears, the secretariat will have to assume somehow. I will then remain in Copenhagen until June 5 or 6.

Otherwise, I understand, it has been decided that I am to return, but I am not informed how. We say about the five-year plan that a factory which is only 90 percent completed is not able to run. The same with a steamship ticket, for which only 90 percent, or rather much less of the cost, does not obtain the ticket. I understand \$60 has arrived here, but to the wrong address, to a name which does not exist, and the necessary identification papers can therefore not be produced to receive the sum. Why such a matter has to be balled up I do not know. You have the correct address.⁵⁰⁷ It is only with difficulty that I have succeeded in making an arrangement whereby comrade Molinier pays me that sum at the present course, on the promise on my part that the money will be faithfully remitted to him. You will therefore have to make the arrangements, either to change the name of the recipient now, or, if the amount will be returned, to immediately send it American Express money order to R. Molinier, 2 Bis Rue Etienne Marey, Paris. It should not be necessary to emphasize the importance of that promise being kept faithfully. But that is only one part. With the present rate of exchange, it costs \$98 from Cherbourg. It costs more from Copenhagen. I know the financial situation of the League, but you cannot just leave me stranded here. I therefore must absolutely receive the balance necessary, sent to Denmark before June 5. You can still reach me there at the following address: M. Svaabeck, Lindevej 5, Hillerod, Denmark.

Resolution on the American Question

Plenum of the International Left Opposition

13-16 May 1933

*This resolution was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 14 (29 June 1933). The ILO plenum dealt with the crisis in the CLA as the first point on its agenda. After hearing reports from Swabeck and Shachtman, the plenum appointed a commission of Witte, Naville, Shachtman, and Swabeck to finalize this resolution.*⁵⁰⁸

The plenum declares that no political, principled differences exist in the American League which are in opposition to the reestablishment of organizational unity and a liquidation of the factional struggle. The plenum declares that the two factions undertake to make every effort possible in this direction in agreement with the international organization.

The American political situation and the immense tasks which confront the Communist vanguard at the present period imperatively require the reestablishment of internal unity in the ranks of the League. At the same time, the enlargement of the outside activities of the organization furnishes one of the important conditions for an effective liquidation of the factional struggle.

The rapid assurance of the first steps on this path is indispensable. The plenum, in full agreement with the representatives of the two factions existing in the League, points out the following measures:

- a. Common efforts should be made for the preparation and discussion of the third conference in such fashion as to definitely modify the atmosphere and prepare the final liquidation of the internal fight.
- b. Common efforts should be made to put into application the general propositions set forth in the letter of comrade Gourov.
- c. The factional organizations should be dissolved. The former subjects under dispute must not serve as a criterion for the liquidation of the conflict. On the contrary, the discussion must before

all be based on the political and organizational problems posed by the general activity of the League.

d. In the case where organizational measures have been taken which would sharpen the friction, common efforts should be made to obtain an immediate modification.

e. All the local organizations should invite the leaders of the two groups to reduce their collisions within such limits that the speeches, statements, etc., of the two sides cannot become a weapon in the hands of the adversary.

f. All the theses, countertheses, and amendments should appear on time, not solely to all the members of the League but also to the I.S., in order that the discussion in all its phases take place under the eyes of all the sections and under their control.

g. The definite date of the conference should be designated in agreement with the I.S. in order that the latter have the possibility, in case of necessity, to delegate a representative to it.

h. Until the conference, the present CC, which evidently remains in force, should enjoy the support of all the members of the organization. For its part, the CC will abstain from artificial organizational manipulations within itself having a factional character.

i. The local organizations should be guided in the election of delegates by considerations of the sufficient firmness and independence of their representatives on the question of safeguarding the unity of the League; in the same sense, instructions should be voted to the delegates.

j. The leaders of the two present disputing groups should evidently enter into the future CC, but it is necessary *to put alongside of them some solid comrades having authority who have not taken part in the fight of the two groups and are capable of purifying the atmosphere within the interior of the CC.* To this end, it is necessary to enlarge the dimensions of the CC considerably.

k. In case of need, the secretariat will unite in a special plenum devoted to the American question with the participation of the representatives of the two groups.

Foolish and Petty Actions Did Not Help Us

Letter by Albert Glotzer to Max Shachtman⁵⁰⁹

23 May 1933

After the ILO plenum in Paris, Shachtman went to Prinkipo where this letter reached him. At Rose Karsner's insistence Cannon had left New York to attend the Free Tom Mooney Congress in Chicago, using funds privately raised by Stamm.⁵¹⁰ With 1,048 delegates from a broad array of labor and left organizations, the three-day conference was a real united front and a big step forward in Mooney defense efforts. The Stalinists controlled the steering committee, but they were unable to prevent Cannon's election to the conference resolutions committee or to the National Mooney Council of Action. The main conference resolution incorporated many of the CLA's proposals for action, but it also required participating organizations to refrain from criticizing one another. Cannon's proposed amendment, "Each organization entering the united front obligates itself to discipline in action but retains its full independence and its right to criticism," lost with 63 votes. The CP subsequently strangled further Mooney defense efforts.

Glotzer's letter refers to the first Militant article on the conference, "LO Scores at Chicago Mooney Congress," which stressed the CLA's 39 delegates and its influence in the PMA rather than the united-front nature of the affair. A more comprehensive article by Glotzer in the next issue corrected this skew.⁵¹¹ The Chicago local refused to circulate the Militant containing the first article, and Glotzer complained to the NC about the article's exaggerations and "sensationalism," which he argued would endanger the League's work among the miners.⁵¹²

At the conference, Cannon and Chicago CLA leaders met with Allard, head of the PMA's substantial delegation, and reached an agreement on the League's future work in the union. Allard did not live up to the agreement. Cannon continued his Midwest speaking tour in Kansas City, St. Louis, the Illinois coalfields, and Minneapolis, speaking on the campaign to free Mooney.

I am sending this letter to Prinkipo with the hope that it will find you already there. There are many things that could be writ-

ten about, but I shall touch only the more important ones in this letter, in addition to answering yours from the boat, which Marty forwarded to me.

1. Marty has undoubtedly already acquainted you with the seemingly small question of the first Mooney article that appeared in the *Militant*. It was a scandalous report, to put it mildly, and the "review" that Lovestone's sheet gave it was appropriate. Besides being inaccurate, its boasting was obviously adolescent. That the *Daily Worker* has said nothing about it might be due to their belief that it is a true report. While Hugo and I both protested, I'm sure that Hugo doesn't feel so good at learning its authorship. In telling the story to Jim, he refers to its author in the well-known and convenient "they" at the center. And Cannon thinks that it is bad, though not fatal; woe unto us, if any of our comrades had been responsible for it. But since it was Stamm, who has worked himself into agent no. 1, the matter will be conveniently overlooked as a small incident. In the meantime, of course, Prinkipo and Paris will have observed this great event and our "greater" role.

2. Cannon's presence at the Mooney congress was a great help to us. This must be acknowledged, and it appears to me that the objection raised to his going was not very smart, nor also to his return to the Illinois coalfields. I shall speak of this later in the letter in connection with some remarks on the internal situation. From his report on his stay in KC, he has made good success. As a member of the National Mooney Council of Action, he was the principal speaker at the Mooney mass meeting there. He raised \$400, \$300 of which was already sent in to the national office. A Spartacus Youth Club was organized, with a membership of 12, including three YPSLs. Six new members joined the branch and its membership is now nine! Now he has received an invitation from the Mooney committee of Minneapolis to speak at their mass meeting. Our comrades there were instrumental in bringing about this invitation. Under the circumstances, the NC members here (although, I understand, without formal authority) have recommended that he go there. Under the circumstances this is the only action possible. Naturally we understand that his stay here and his visits to KC, St. Louis, and Minneapolis are made with an eye to the internal situation and the coming conference. But you cannot counterpose that to the other questions involved in his trip.

While he was here we had a meeting with Allard. I sent Marty a duplicate letter to forward to you and I believe you have that. What I wrote about Gerry's attitude was so. As to the practical application of the agreement, that of course remains a question, and only the next month or two will be able to ascertain one way or the other with regard to him. Marty makes an apt remark when he raised the question of our "negotiations" with Allard, and that our relations with him are not those of a fellow member of the League but more or less those of a sympathizer. And giving thought to the question, I feel too that his membership is more or less a formal question without real content. I am greatly disappointed in Gerry, and I think I can speak with more authority than anyone else in the League. Ten years of association with him gives me such an authority. He is entirely too subjective to be able to reason. He cannot be objective about matters relating to the organization. In spite of the years he has spent in the movement, attending almost every Party training school, and in spite of all the years of good associations (and some bad, very, very bad), Gerry consummated that period of his life by acting not as a Communist but as a militant trade unionist. Yet in spite of that, I think the agreement we made with him was correct, because it creates the possibility of saving Gerry for our movement and collaborating in the work. I know too that agreement in words and its application in practice do not always coincide. But if we are able to effect a maximum application of our agreement, we will have laid the basis for our future work in the coalfields and naturally of saving Gerry. The fact that we have been unable to send Oehler back soon after the Mooney congress is holding back the work, but he is to leave this weekend, and then we will be able to tell just what happens. I have written Allard twice since the Mooney congress and haven't received a reply or acknowledgment of those letters. I am not trying to reason why this is so—it might be due to many things. Likewise, we are unaware of what he has been doing since he returned to the field. And I must admit that I am somewhat apprehensive. Just such an article as Stamm wrote in the *Militant* on the Mooney congress would be enough to destroy our collaboration, as it undoubtedly will hurt us a great deal with the miners, anyway. If anything breaks soon, I shall keep you informed.

I cannot leave off on this question without mentioning the opinions expressed by LD on the miners' situation. I do not know

who has been supplying him with the information, but I must ask you to tell him, at least for me, since I once intended to write him, that his views both with regard to Jim's role at the Gillespie conference and Allard's work are absolutely wrong. We are not concerned with his general statements, which are correct in themselves, but with the fact that they do not apply in this situation at all. I might say, if I have not already mentioned it, that Angelo, as far as I can make it out, agrees with the position we hold. If there is anything that you must make clear to him, that is the question of the work in Illinois.

John has had some talks with Cannon. I give you the gist of it. We are the factionalists, and that runs through his whole attitude. Jim admits one error: his proposal of Gordon on the committee. The theory is now advanced that Shachtman is influenced too much, and from the bad side, by his incurable factional friends in New York. Glotzer, since he is away from the influence of Shachtman, is not so bad. Their aim is to drive at Cannon personally. And he cites such actions as the motion to send you to Illinois and not him, the attempts to prevent him from coming to the Mooney congress. Ours is a fight for leadership, we pick up all kinds of picayune issues, etc., etc. His attitude is extremely bitter, in spite of an outward appearance of calmness. The letter of LD on the same issues I mention causes him to harp on these issues. He is reticent to express a conclusive attitude on the national conference. And he always speaks now of mass work, independent activity, as if it were his discovery.

I cannot leave off on this point without mentioning Jim's conversion to the idea of moving the center to Chicago. The question in itself has merit. My own attitude has for some years been warm to this idea and it has not been a secret to either you or Marty. But Jim's enthusiasm over the idea is new, even though he now poses it, also, as his own brand-new discovery. He would like to have this move committed by fall!—providing, of course, that there is unanimity in the committee. Why Jim wants this is clear, at least at this moment, from his attitude to the internal situation in the League—in consideration of the situation in the New York branch. Of course, the other reasons he states are reasons that have been held before by John and me. Such reasons: Chicago as a central point of the movement, the key to so many fields of work, the place to build an American movement, the industrial center of

the country. He links this up with the "new line" of the League toward independent work and greater participation in mass work. Marty, of course, raised the two important questions of our relation to the Party, the center of which is in New York, and how such a move will affect the *Militant*. I mentioned this in a discussion we had. Naturally, neither Jim nor Oehler consider these important or decisive in the question. John, of course, is for Chicago, now and forever. The question will undoubtedly be raised in the committee or at the conference, and we will have to give it special consideration. I propose that the comrades in New York and yourself give thought to the matter and let me know in detail what your opinions are. You might even discuss the question with the Old Man and with Arne, if you still have the opportunity.

3. I mentioned in one of my letters that Jim showed me the Gourov letter, accompanying with a remark to the effect: Gourov has certainly set you down a peg or two. This was said in the presence of other comrades, for effect. Upon reading it I breathed a sigh of relief, not because I feared that the Old Man or the I.S. would find themselves in irreconcilable opposition to us, but in the obvious proximity of views between ourselves, as contained in our main document, and those expressed by Gourov. That is incontestable, and I have no reason to doubt that much of the recent protest of the International Secretariat, re LD's sympathies toward us, comes from protests of Arne and Jim. It is obviously a rejection of their views and approach to the internal situation. Johnny found an occasion to jibe at Hugo, intimating that if Hugo had followed the line they agreed upon, he would have found LD supporting him. But it never was actually in the cards for Hugo to follow an independent position in the present struggle. He was already bound to support Cannon long before he left New York.

While I cannot help but agree with the analysis you made of the letter—such comparisons were made by us in Chicago—yet I must warn against an overconfidence with reference to the attitude of the European comrades. The latest letter of LD in answer to yours, I presume, is a pretty indication of what ails them over there. I am going to write to LD and express in clear terms my attitude on the method used by some of the European comrades. If your position or lack of one in the past is to be made the barometer for deciding the internal situation here, there will never be a solution to it. In this respect, I am willing to allow, some

foolish and petty actions on our part will not help us any, and I am inclined to regard the above-mentioned actions in that light. Naturally, the comrades across will be influenced by "international" considerations, and they will no doubt be helped or rather have been aided in this by our good friend Swabeck. I assume that your arrival found them well educated on our situation. I say naturally, advisedly, because their problems are closer at hand and your previous position will always and forever, I'm afraid, be taken in consideration as a lever by which to judge anything that happens in the American League. How much that can help to solve our situation is still a mystery to me. But I accept that it will play a big part in the position of the committee, and that your famous or infamous letter to LD of December 1931 will be mentioned in the course of an examination of the groupings in America; and perchance, who knows, my insistence that my resolution go out with Cannon's may be cited as another instance wherein the minority stood in the way of a solution to the international questions.

The Old Man already assumes that support will come to us from those sections who have and continue to play a sorry role in the ILO. Is this supposition based on fact, or is it an assumption based on the past actions of these comrades? And, too, is the rest of the secretariat already definitely lined up against us, as is indicated by LD's letter, even before they have heard your report on the situation? I guess that I could go on raising one question after another, but since you will have already had the meeting with the I.S. and discussions with LD, I will await some news before expressing any further opinions on the basis of the material on hand.

Speaking of material, I cannot help but mention once more that I'm disgusted with the way in which the out-of-town members of the committee are informed of international affairs, even by those who have spent day and night professing their internationalism. The verbatim reports between Swabeck and LD on the Negro question and the question of American imperialism and the prospects for our movement thus far remain, at least for my part, the private property of Cannon, et al. The Nin-Trotsky letters are also part of the NY archives, and I am to wait until doomsday before I can see them. I suppose I am being repaid in kind.

4. The Negro thesis has made a strong impression on me. I have read it only once and any criticism that I make results of that one

and hurried reading. I am impressed particularly with the general analysis of the Negro and his position in American society, the question of the Black Belt, and the theory of self-determination. But somehow I feel that the ms. weakens toward the end, in the sense that the theory of the permanent revolution is not posed powerfully enough. From a first reading it appears that you wrote the pamphlet in little more than one session and tired toward the end. But I will go over it carefully and make detailed comment on its various points. I don't know if I will reach you by that time, but you can make the fight with LD on its present basis without much fear of weakening our position. I'm quite sure that LD will see our point and come to its support.

I close for the moment. If anything arises, I shall write in care of LD. Otherwise, if you should have some information, and undoubtedly you will have, I expect a letter soon.



Peace Treaty

Communist League of America National Committee

Published 29 June 1933

This undated resolution was published in CLA Internal Bulletin no. 14 (29 June 1933).

In the opinion of the National Committee, the resolution of the plenum of the International Left Opposition, adopted with the participation and agreement of the representatives of the two groups in the NC, provides a basis for the cessation of the internal struggle and the unification of the NC.

The NC accepts the resolution of the plenum and pledges itself to cooperate with the international organization to carry out its provisions. It invites the cooperation of the entire membership of the League for a new program of work to be conducted unitedly in the spirit of the plenum resolution.

The NC considers the conditions especially favorable now for a considerable development of independent activity in the class struggle and is working out a practical program of such activity.

The successful execution of this program, which in itself will exert a powerful force to normalize the internal situation of the League, requires in turn the unification of the NC and the liquidation of faction organizations. The NC members, as leaders of the two groupings, hereby declare their agreement to work together deliberately to this end.



We Must Call a Retreat

Letter by Max Shachtman to Comrades⁵¹³

9 June 1933

This letter was mimeographed for circulation among Shachtman's supporters in the CLA.

I have thus far refrained from writing to you because I was anxious to avoid giving you fragmentary and superficial impressions. Even though I realized how intense an interest you have in the opinions of the European comrades concerning our internal situation, I thought it preferable that you get, from the very start, a rounded-out picture of how they view the crisis in the American League.

You must already have a pretty clear idea of what happened at the Paris plenum. The comrades—with one or two exceptions—were greatly handicapped in the discussion of the American question. Most of them pointed out that they and their sections had never received a single one of the internal bulletins issued by the American League and were, consequently, at a loss to understand the origin and nature of the dispute. This deficiency was partially surmounted by a rather brief report to the plenum by comrade Witte, upon whose objectivity I found it possible to rely entirely. He was followed by two presentations, one by Swabeck and the other by me. Neither of the two last-named reports was of the sharp and tense character that has marked the discussions in the League, and it was evident that all of the comrades present were of one mind: While there are certain divergences of view in the American League and even an unhealthy internal regime, there

is nevertheless no basis for the continuation of the acute struggle which has tormented the organization for over a year. The resolution adopted was drafted by comrade Naville. As you can see, it is brief and, with the additional proposal that the factions be liquidated as speedily as possible, it merely incorporates the concrete propositions contained in the Gourov letter on the American League situation. I was able to support the resolution without any reservations, thus conducting myself, I believe, entirely in conformity with the point of view we unanimously adopted at the very last meeting of the group before my departure when we endorsed the line and the proposals of the Gourov letter. In this connection, I find it necessary also to point out that while I could not, of course, associate myself with the point of view elaborated by Swabek in his presentation, it was nevertheless apparent that he was prepared to acknowledge that the majority faction had made a number of errors in its conduct of affairs, particularly with regard to the minority in the League. Thus, in his speech as well as in private conversations with me, he admitted that the co-optations proposal was wrong, equally wrong was the decision to deprive Marty of his vote on the National Committee, and so on. His attitude was rather conciliatory and he assured me that upon his return he would do everything in his power—even if it were necessary to break with any comrade with whom he had been associated in the past—to reestablish a normal and healthy situation in the League. As for the plenum resolution itself, it hardly needs to be emphasized that it is my opinion (and I believe it will be yours as well) that it should be endorsed by us and by the League as a whole and that a genuine and not merely a diplomatic effort should be made to execute its provisions in the life of the League.

Even more interesting and important than the resolution of the plenum are the views of comrade Trotsky in Prinkipo, as well as of comrade Frank, because both of them, particularly the former, have followed the discussion in the League virtually from its inception and are in a better position to express a well-founded point of view. It is only in the last couple of days that we have had the opportunity to discuss the American situation. As you will easily understand, there is more than the League to be discussed in Prinkipo. Germany, Austria, Russia—these and many other problems occupy the largest share of the time and activities of the little Prinkipo group of the Opposition. However, we have just

had two discussions which you will find highly interesting. The first one—a conversation between comrade Trotsky and me—I will communicate to you more extensively because it was here that Trotsky expressed himself in the greatest detail; whereas in the second, it took on more the form of a meeting of all the comrades who are living here, during which I reported for more than an hour on our standpoint with regard to the situation, following which comrade Trotsky did not do much more than repeat in much more condensed form that which he had already said in his first conversation with me. I will give you below the gist of what he said, sometimes paraphrasing him, sometimes summarizing him, sometimes quoting him directly. At all events, even where I do not quote him literally, you may take what I give you as a faithful reproduction of his views:

Trotsky: I do not agree either with you or with Swabeck when you say that I exaggerate the imminence and danger of a split in the American League. It is not incomprehensible that the leading participants of the two factions overlook the danger the League faces. The automatic logic of the present situation in the American League leads directly to a split and that in the very near future. It cannot continue like this for very long. The League has lost its recruiting ability. Workers will not join it under the present circumstances. They will say to themselves: Yes, the ideas of the Opposition may be good, but the organization is rotten, demoralized, torn to bits with an incomprehensible quarrel that paralyzes it. The League itself will at best mark time for a while and then lose ground. The enterprises of the organization will be seriously injured. Already it is clear that a financial crisis is developing around the *Militant*, which is compelled to come out, even if for only one issue, with two pages instead of four—and this after more than four years of existence of the League. If the internal situation continues as it is, the split is absolutely inevitable. And what will that mean? All the hard work of the past, the work of publishing, the work of issuing the *Militant*, of gathering together the initial cadres, will explode into the air. Individually and collectively we will be discredited in the eyes of the Communist workers; the League, the Opposition, and its ideas will be discredited in their eyes, and *the movement in America will be set back for years to come.*

Everything possible must be done to avoid the split before it

is too late. What we have now in the League is mutual obstruction, from both sides, which prevents the League from moving ahead. If this strangulating obstruction continues, it may prove to be better to propose a split from here, that is, with the initiative of the European Opposition. In that case, we would have a situation in America similar to that in Czechoslovakia, where the Opposition is divided and ineffectual and unofficial. But even such a measure may prove to be necessary if the present impossible situation is allowed to continue.

What should you (i.e., what should I, Shachtman) tell your faction: You know that Swabeck promised here to attenuate the struggle when he returns. He wrote a letter while here, a personal letter to me, in which he recognizes many of the mistakes of the majority and in which he promises to help settle the fight even if it means a break with his faction. I told him many bitter truths and he admitted the errors because it is the majority which bears the responsibility for the League and it should be more considerate and conciliatory toward the minority.

But the minority? Let us see. It anticipates too much; it is too impatient and nervous. The minority, let us say, has no confidence in Cannon or in the Cannon group. It is convinced that it is impossible to work together with him effectively and loyally, or that he is not a worthwhile element. Good. Let us assume that you are correct in this conviction (an assumption which I have of course no ground at all for making). But let us assume it for the moment. The fact is, however, that the minority has not succeeded in convincing the International Left Opposition of its view. It has not yet won the ILO to its side. The ILO is unable to discern any issues of a defined or definable character or form. Should any emerge, you may be sure that the sections will take a position one way or the other. Bear in mind that it is very patient, this ILO, but at the same time it does not yield an inch in questions of principle. Take the case of our present dispute with the German Reichsleitung [national leadership] on the question of the slogan for a new communist party in Germany.⁵¹⁴ The comrades have a false point of view. But we are extremely patient with them, we do not take any measures against them, we scrupulously avoid any appearance of maneuvering and intrigue, but at the same time we do not yield a single inch in our principled position. Or take the case of Frey and Landau. For a long time, Frey kept on writ-

ing, in his paper and in letters to me, that Landau is an abominable creature, a cockroach, etc. I continued to reply to Frey: Perhaps you are correct and perhaps not. We do not yet know and it is impossible for us to accept your beliefs, your word, on credit, so to say. We must allow the passage of time to provide the test.

So it is with you (i.e., with us in the U.S.). You anticipate too much. You must have much more patience. You must orient yourselves on a longer perspective, on a longer period of work. As for myself, I do not place a plus or a minus sign before either of the two groups. I am not prejudiced in favor of this one or that one, one way or the other. I have a waiting, expectant attitude on the American question (“Ich habe einen abwartenden Standpunkt”).

What would I advise you to write to your faction? I propose to you a maneuver, which is not at all wrong from my point of view and which should not injure your faction from your point of view. I mean a maneuver in the best sense of the term. *Il faut reculer pour mieux sauter!* You must retreat in order the better to leap forward! You must have patience and not anticipate so much. If your estimate of Cannon and his group is correct, you have only to wait. (*Interruption by Shachtman:* Yes, but then we will be accused of acting like the hungry lion, lying in wait and ready to pounce on an opponent as soon as there is an “issue.”) *Trotsky resuming:* But it is better to be an intelligent lion than one that runs around violently and aimlessly!

What have you to lose by such an attitude? You have everything to gain. It is better for you. If there is a dispute that you cannot settle in the League, you can count upon the intervention of the whole international Opposition. If you should prove to be on the right side, the ILO will support you. But when you have a problem before you, you should not immediately make a fighting issue out of it. It is better for you and for the League if you approach Cannon, ask his opinion about it, ask Swabek's opinion about it, talk to them first. Seek to convince them in a comradely manner that your view is correct. Only if you fail to get agreement in that way, then you can go to the National Committee, or if necessary appeal to the New York branch. Then you can say: Comrades, I tried to reach a comradely agreement with Cannon or with the others and despite all my efforts it was impossible; now I must appeal to you. What have you to lose by such a procedure? You will only be strengthened by it. You know how

savagely Stalin and co. attack the Left Opposition and me personally. Yet, I even make proposals to those people who systematically defame the Opposition and myself. I recently wrote a letter to the Central Committee, which I sent to all the embassies of the Soviet Union, offering my services in the defense of the Soviets in whatever capacity they may see fit to employ these services.³¹⁵ You have a hundredfold more reason to act in the same way in the League, where we are, after all, defending a common cause.

I have another proposal which I think you ought to communicate to your friends. The atmosphere in the League is thoroughly poisoned. I propose that anybody in the League who makes personal attacks upon a comrade should be immediately expelled. This applies to both sides, of course. If a comrade has a charge to make and cannot obtain satisfaction in normal ways and if there are grounds for his charges, let him appeal if necessary to the International Secretariat. But if anyone henceforward continues to poison the League atmosphere by personal slanders and attacks and provocations, expel him immediately! Take the initiative! If it is a comrade on your side, set the example to the others: You yourself should be the one to make the motion for his expulsion.

Politics nowadays requires numerous abrupt turns. The League needs an abrupt turn. I propose that you should initiate one. Not merely a little turn, but a really serious and big one. *Il faut reculer, reculer, reculer! Il faut commander un recul* (A retreat must be ordered)! Take the initiative; you have nothing to lose by it.

* * * * *

The same evening, we had a meeting with all the comrades present, where I presented our point of view in some detail, dwelling particularly on the internal regime in the League, without neglecting to touch upon my role in the international dispute. As to the former—suppression of our documents, co-optations, depriving Marty of his vote, no internal discussion bulletins, etc., etc.—there was not even a question of dispute. I call to your attention that even at the plenum, comrade Blasco, after hearing my report, declared with some astonishment: “*C’est évident qu’il y a quelque chose de malsain dans le régime intérieur de la Ligue*” (It is plain that there is something unhealthy in the League’s internal regime). Here, comrade Frank, with whom I discussed privately the American question, made similar observations. He

told me how disturbed they were here, comrade Trotsky included, when Marty had his vote taken from him. He inclined to ridicule the inflating of the famous Carter "group" into an issue, for the whole construction seemed to them so trivial and inconsequential. When I mentioned to him that my proposal to send National Committee minutes to all branches six months or more in existence had been voted down as "non-Communist organizational procedure," he was also dismayed.⁵¹⁶ In France, he pointed out, the local groups receive all the minutes and documents of the executive committee, they have a permanent discussion bulletin at their disposal in which are printed statements even of elements who have been expelled or who have quit the Ligue and are engaged in fighting it!

In the discussion after my report, Frank asked a couple of questions and only comrade Trotsky spoke. It was in the evening, rather late, and he spoke rather briefly...but plainly. His remarks were largely a summary of what he had already said to me in the conversation cited above. "A few words as to the internal regime," he said. "We already discussed this subject with Swabeck, and with that sincerity which is characteristic of him, he admitted that the majority had made not a few mistakes in this respect. We said at that time that they were the mistakes of a sectarian bureaucratism. Now we have Swabeck's assurance, in writing as well, that he will work, as a League member and not as a faction member, to repair the situation." As for Shachtman's remarks on the international question, it seems to me that he sought to "bagatellize" his differences with the International Left Opposition. In turn he supported or failed to fight against all those elements whom we considered pernicious for the progress of the Opposition—Rosmer, Landau, Naville, Mill, the Spaniards. They continued to base themselves upon him, they used his name in their factional interests, and he took no steps to disabuse them of their confidence in his support. I do not say that his group had the same position that he had in the important international questions. But is it not a bad sign that they did not call him to account when during that whole period he, who represented not only them but the League as a whole in the international field, took a false position? I take the hypothesis that the other members of his group did not support these alien elements in the ILO only because they did not have the opportunity to express themselves on the European disputes

before they were settled. This is only a hypothesis and I do not make it as a reproach.

I do not share the optimism of Shachtman or Swabek on the question of the split danger in the League. I think it is not exaggerated to point to its imminence. It must be avoided at all costs, or else we may be compelled to advocate a separation from here. Perhaps some expulsions may be the only way out to prevent a split. You (i.e., Shachtman) should not wait for the others to make a motion to expel one of your comrades who poisons the atmosphere with personal accusations and slanders. You should set the example and take the initiative in proposing his expulsion. Then the comrades everywhere will understand that you mean it, that you are serious, that you are ready to act.

* * * * *

The aim of my letter, which I am writing in agreement with comrade Trotsky and which I shall show to him before I send it off, is not so much to give you his point of view as it is to give you mine. Although he presents it from a somewhat different angle and with a somewhat different tone from that of the Gourov letter, you can see that it is essentially the same. Just as he told Swabek some "bitter truths," so he told me some as well. Take our opposition to Swabek's leaving for Europe: It was neither well formulated nor well founded, and it is necessary to acknowledge that frankly. You will remember that Albert and Maurice already expressed themselves before my departure in the same sense. The same may be said of other positions we took. It is true that I feel now more confirmed than ever in the opposition we manifested to all the bureaucratic actions and conduct of the majority in the past period. But even here, where I still feel we were so thoroughly correct, our position and the position of the League would have been strengthened immeasurably if we had tried ten times harder to see to it that we, at least, did nothing by word or deed that would contribute to the extreme tension in the League.

I am writing this letter primarily for the purpose of requesting that you call a meeting of a dozen or so comrades in New York to discuss its contents and adopt a formal position toward it. Also that it be sent to Boston, Chicago, Toronto, Youngstown, and Minneapolis for the information of our friends. I cannot urge too

strongly upon you the fact that the objectivity and disinterestedness of Trotsky and the European comrades can be entirely relied upon. The advice that Trotsky gives in his conversations with me can and should be taken into consideration and acted upon, not merely as a “clever maneuver” from our factional point of view, but as measures in the initiation of which, we have every reason to believe, the League, and we with it, will be considerably strengthened and be enabled to emerge from its crisis. The proposal he makes with regard to expulsions is an extremely harsh one, but if we and all our comrades refrain from laying themselves open to such a measure as expulsion, if we are overscrupulous and particularly careful in seeing to it that even if there is a heated political discussion, we refuse to be personally provoked, refuse to provoke others, refuse to indulge in personal recrimination, or what may be considered as such—in that case, we will not only have to our credit the clearing of the smoky atmosphere in the League, but perhaps more important than that: The clearing of the “personal” element from the atmosphere is precisely what will make it possible for anyone in the League to present a standpoint objectively and have it discussed on its merits. Then those who in the midst of such a discussion try to recharge the old atmosphere with its old fumes will not have a leg to stand on, either in the League or in our international. Read over again carefully and objectively the observations of comrade Trotsky. We have, I repeat after him, *nothing to lose by honestly and sincerely taking his counsel and acting straightforwardly.*

PS: On other questions (miners, Negro question, etc.), I will write later. I may stay here for two or three months and I beg you all to write to me as to how the situation stands in general. I have already shown comrade Trotsky some of the letters I have received and, even where he disagrees with their contents, it helps him to get a more rounded picture of how matters stand.



Report from Prinkipo

Letter by Max Shachtman to Martin Abern⁵¹⁷

6 July 1933

*This letter was written shortly after Radical Party premier Eduard Daladier granted Trotsky a French visa. Shachtman accompanied Trotsky and Sedova when they sailed for France on July 17. Just before leaving Prinkipo Trotsky completed his first article calling for a new international and new communist parties around the world. Shachtman's letter reflects some of the thinking that led to this decision, but does not anticipate it.*⁵¹⁸

*Shachtman refers to the growing redbaiting campaign in the PMA, where the leadership was seeking an accommodation with the hated John L. Lewis and the UMW. Allard had been removed as editor of the Progressive Miner, and three dozen leftist militants, including CLAAer Joe Angelo, were up for expulsion in the PMA's Springfield district.*⁵¹⁹

I hope that by this time the letters I have already sent to the States have arrived and that at least part of the irritating impression I seem to have made on the comrades has been dispelled. By now, too, you will probably be aware of the decision of the Daladier ministry to grant LD a visa for France. In all probability, by the time this meets your eyes, we shall be on our way to somewhere in France, with all the attendant excitement. The relief it affords LD and Natalya Ivanova is so immense that it can hardly be described. Turkey has been a prison for them for four years and more, with the solitary exception of the all-too-brief escape to Denmark for a couple of weeks. Now as to some more pressing matters, resulting from another rather extensive discussion with LD on the situation in the League.

The Miners' Situation. For my own part, I cannot regard the latest developments inside the PMA except as a literal translation into reality of the prognosis we elaborated in our statement. If anything, the essentials have been confirmed with even greater rapidity than was foreseen by us. It is the reaction which is now on the offensive, for one thing, and a more clearly reformist policy is being imposed upon the organization by what was once an

“honest rank-and-file” leadership. It was hard to present the dispute here in the same clear manner as we knew it by personal experience in New York as a result of the oral discussions that took place inside and outside the branch. I do not hesitate to repeat my conviction that the *outlook* on the situation and the *perspectives* of Cannon—leave aside all incidental and secondary questions arising out of the fundamental considerations—were unmistakably tinged with opportunism, expressed in its crassest forms by Clarke and Carmody, who lacked only Cannon’s poise and argumentative skill but were otherwise in essential accord with him. Here we have one of those crying examples of the unfinality, so to say, of documents alone. They can be written so easily with an eye for the record, whereas the oral declarations, the accent, the *fundamental stream of thought*, which are so tremendously decisive, are of such a fugitive character from the point of view of being able to lay your hands on them, that they are revealed with a far greater freedom than is displayed in written records.

In his remarks, LD concerned himself essentially, as a result, with the question of our relations with Allard. His attitude is the following:

Allard is not an individual, but an institution which we must utilize to the maximum; if necessary, squeeze and squeeze and squeeze until the lemon is ready to be thrown aside. He is the editor of an extremely important trade-union organ. If results were unsatisfactory in the past, it is because our relations with him were more or less literary, that is, conducted by correspondence. The problem can be resolved only by actually incorporating Allard into an organization, by organizing groups of *miners*, of which he must become a part. In their midst, compelled to participate in their discussions and their elaboration of policies, he will at the same time be obligated to carry out these policies in the union. The phrase of Abern is a happy one: Allard is a sympathizer. Does that mean he should be expelled? No, he must be utilized to the end. If the League were composed of 40 percent Allards, it would be a catastrophe; 20 percent would be pretty dangerous; even 10 percent would already be harmful. But there is only one Allard in the League, and we have nothing to fear. If after he has *actually* been made a part of a functioning organization, he fails to fulfill the obligations of membership, then, of course, we must break with him. But there is nothing gained by precipitating the end

before all the preliminary processes have been exhausted. He can, by his position, be of help to the League in various ways. If he fails here or there, he should be checked up, but on those occasions where he does not fail us—however few they may be—he is of service to the movement and we should utilize him. From the formal point of view, Shachtman is of course absolutely correct; but especially in the trade-union question, where the League is so tiny and the masses so backward and reactionary, it is well to lean backward from formalism. The Opposition, in America as elsewhere, is passing beyond the stage of individual selection, where the highest qualifications were required. We are entering upon a new stage. It is therefore necessary to maneuver a little here and there, not surrendering our principled line, but doing everything now to establish contact with the masses.

I do not, of course, know the comrade personally, but it appears to me that the proposal of comrade Cannon with regard to him as a prospective member of the National Committee is a good one. Naturally, I may be mistaken, being at this distance from the scene. Also, if there were two Allards on the National Committee, it would be a big danger. But one? That is possible. First, it will associate him more definitely with the Opposition; it will impress him with his membership in it; it will place more unmistakable obligations upon him. If it does not work out, we have lost nothing by it except a member of the National Committee....

That is the summary of LD's remarks, and as you can see, there is a vast amount of good Communist sense in what he says, *quite apart from the content of our own particular discussion in the League*. Thus Cannon advanced the idea of Allard on the NC with a flaming campaign speech about the "militant fighter who has no need to apologize," etc., etc. LD approaches it from a rather different standpoint. I cannot say that I am in agreement with LD even when the problem is regarded from his angle, but he undoubtedly presents considerations of distinct merit. As a matter of fact, nothing in the organizational policy of Communism speaks against his views: How many times were similar steps taken in Lenin's time in the Communist parties with elements infinitely worse than Allard? Naturally, each concrete case is an individual case and must be considered on its special merits. I am far from convinced that in Allard's case the situation warrants the application of the method recommended by LD. Rather, I would vote

three times for drawing Joe Angelo closer to, and into, the NC than Allard. By the way, as far as the Mooney conference report in the *Militant* is concerned, LD, it goes without saying, expressed himself literally as follows, that such exaggerations are inadmissible in the League. There is a word or two to be added to such a comment, but not very much more, I think.

A Second Party in the U.S. On this score, LD made some observations which I summarize as follows:

It is quite natural and in the nature of things that following the German events and the new orientation of the Opposition, the question of the second party should be thrown up for discussion in various countries. For example, in Switzerland the comrades have already started a discussion on the expediency of orienting toward the second-party slogan in that country. It goes without saying that in the United States we are quite a way off from a situation which warrants raising the slogan for a second party there. But it is quite another thing to pose before the League the task of becoming a mass organization and that in the shortest possible time. Participation in the class struggles of the day is now the primary task of the Opposition, in the U.S. included. If we should be able to rally 2,000 or 3,000 members into the League—of course we would proclaim a new Communist party! The problem is not to pose the slogan at the present time of a second party, but to concentrate our work in such a manner as to lead in that direction. While avoiding the danger of prematurity, we should also be careful not to fall into organizational fetishism and conservatism....

While this is somewhat vague—necessarily so, for it is not a problem that is solved—it is an outlook with which I entirely agree. You will already have received the Gourov letter, which arose out of a discussion I and the other comrades had with LD here, during which I raised the question of the new orientation, the new party, and the attitude toward the SP left wing on an international scale.⁵²⁰ While the situation is greatly different with us than it is in Europe, the general orientation cannot but bear obvious marks of similarity. And despite the stupid attempts of those who “were for the second party all along” to find consolation in the turn we are in the process of making, it is necessary to orient our comrades in that direction.

The Headquarters. Despite many considerations I presented, LD is

strongly in favor of moving the center to Chicago. He is just as strongly against it if it is the move of one faction against the other. But if the NC can be made quasi-unanimous for it, if the organization as a whole can be swung behind the proposal substantially, he is thoroughly in favor of it. "We must turn our backs upon Foster and Browder, and our face to the workers." The National Committee must be taken out of the New York branch. Even from a factional standpoint, it is better that there should be such a "split" as that, rather than a real one. Let New York then demonstrate what it can do and let the other faction demonstrate what it can do from Chicago, without NY. Such a "rivalry" will be healthy for the League. It will enable you to concentrate more easily on the now-aktuelle [on the agenda] miners' situation. As for the plant, that is a practical question that must be solved pencil in hand.⁵²¹ Even assuming that Cannon wants to move for factional reasons, that only means that he has a smart faction. Besides, I see that our friend Glotzer, in his letter to Shachtman, urges their common faction not to commit an error of opposing the transfer to Chicago regardless of Cannon's motives. It is clear that Glotzer, who is the cadet (i.e., youngest) in the Shachtman faction, is far from the worst of its members (ahem!); he must be among the best....

My only comment is this: Thus far, I am not yet convinced. What do you think about the question? It can, of course, wait for decision until I return....For the moment, enough. I will, of course, write again.

The “Master’s” Ways

Letter by Martin Abern to Albert Glotzer⁵²²

6 July 1933

This letter reports on events in New York after Swabeck’s return in mid-June. Toward the end Abern refers to Cannon as “the Master,” a term he and Glotzer often used in their private correspondence.

Thanks for the copy of your letter to Max; it is very informative. I have just written lengthily again to Max; in fact I’ve written him a number of times in the recent days, so that he is fully informed of affairs at this end; since you have written him fully too, he can certainly approach matters with complete information. This machine I’m using doesn’t take a carbon very well, so that I have no copies of any letters that I sent which I could forward to you. I’ll undertake now to cover some matters.

1. I just received another letter from Max. I’ll have it copied and sent to you. It contains a good deal of interesting information.
2. Two weeks ago Tuesday I made the branch executive committee report to the branch. It was presented in a thoroughly objective manner, as to past, present, and future needs. From the minutes I sent you before, you have a pretty good idea of the work we carried on in the past period. I presented these matters in a way that made discussion of the problems before us possible in an objective manner. My report was very well received and its character remarked upon by many comrades. Indeed, at the elections last Tuesday, at which I could not be present, I received so many encomiums from many directions that I’m sure I’d have been embarrassed at such praise had I been present. But we can leave that.

Stamm countered with a written and read statement of such a filthy and ultrafactional character that the branch was revolted by it, and even members of his own faction reacted sharply against it. Ever since they have had to be explaining and apologizing for it. But its rotten character had its effect—against the Cannonites. When it is finally handed in (Stamm took care to hold it), I suppose it

will not be recognizable from the original reading, but while the record may thus be changed, in New York it has had its results, and not well for them. What one sees and hears isn't erased so easily in the minds of comrades, despite the well-known habit of record-making by Cannon and co. I refrain from summarizing my report to you since you have a good idea of the actual work. I might say that Swabeck's pussyfooting on Stamm's report, which he heard, hasn't stood Swabeck in good stead. And just in passing—in case you're kidding yourself too—Swabeck since his arrival has just been the same old pliant faction agent of Cannon.

3. Swabeck a week ago yesterday reported to the NC. It was quite brief. After all it was only for my benefit, Cannon having received and heard everything many days before. I summarize his report in reference to America (what he said about the other countries you already know, having been in the *Militant*, etc.—a rehash on Germany, etc.). I quote Swabeck accurately, I'm sure. What he made was essentially a faction report, and LD is kidding himself if he thinks Swabeck is any different: By his biological makeup he is always subject to the influence of the last one exerting pressure. He said:

Trotsky says, concerning America, that the German catastrophe means the further demoralization of the CPs. In America—the weakest section of the CI—we must turn to more independent, mass work....A split situation exists in the League.

The National Committee, Swabeck attributes to Trotsky, has two elements—and presumably its followers are like elements. One is an older labor group, trained in the unions, going back to even before the days of the formation of the Party—that's the majority. The other group is the younger group, intellectuals, etc.

The majority NC is politically intransigent. It was also organizationally intransigent and there it made its mistakes; it must be more tolerant of a minority. Then Swabeck outlined the concrete criticisms made by Trotsky on organizational matters—he named only a few.

Political differences had arisen—according to Trotsky—having only symptomatic significance as yet. He stood on the criticisms made of Max on the international (European) question.

The majority had been correct politically on the Red Army question, the Illinois miners, opposition to the blocs of the minority. I cite the outstanding points Swabeck attributes to Trotsky.

At the I.S. plenum he and Max arrived at an agreement. The I.S. plenum was on a comparatively low level.

This report to the NC Swabeck said he would elaborate to the branch when he reported (which was last Saturday).

These in essence are Swabeck's claims. As you see, just a faction agent's report. I decline to accept for one second what he attributes to Trotsky. And I have of course sent a more complete report of Swabeck's report to Max to take up with Trotsky. Unless I'm nuts, it should make LD's ears tingle. Imagine the gall: Claim vindication on the Red Army question—after Cannon devoted a whole public mass meeting to explaining away his original remarks and found it expedient to withdraw his article from publication. As to the miners, shiver my timbers, we've been vindicated entirely by all that has happened; and I note that Max in his latest letter asserts that point of view sharply. As to blocs, it is to laugh. In each instance, it was the revolt of the overwhelming bulk of the branch to the organizational malpractices of the Cannon group and which are so roundly condemned by the I.S. and Trotsky.

Swabeck mentioned that he did not return as an "independent." Indeed not; he returned and remained—in Cannon's pocket. Don't kid yourself otherwise.

Before I continue on this matter, allow me to turn back a moment. Chronology doesn't seem to work out exactly. At a subsequent branch meeting—the week after my report to the branch—when the elections were to take place and when the meeting was already under way, Cannon announced that Swabeck had requested that the branch elections be postponed till after he had made his report to the branch. Swabeck was not yet at the meeting. I stated that I had no objection if Swabeck made such a request, though I could not understand why Swabeck had not at least mentioned his request to me—as an NC member and branch organizer—especially since I had spoken to him that very morning. But let that stand for itself. Or for that matter, why wait till the very night of the elections for the suggestion? Anyway, as evidence that we hoped only good would result, the branch accepted the request and postponed the branch elections till July 4. The next day Swabeck reported to the NC; on the following Saturday—prior to July 4—to the branch.

At the NC meeting, Cannon spoke some ten minutes on his tour and his ideas of the future work. You are acquainted with

them better than I. They refer to the so-called mass paper, to be called the *Rebel*, workers clubs on a broad—not opposition—sympathizing base; have the *Militant* remain a theoretical organ, etc., move to Chicago—all based on his latest empirical gyrations of the mind: independent work, function like a second party, even if not yet putting out the slogan.

While I'm on this I'll say a couple of words. His ideas are not formulated at all clearly, so far as I've heard. Empiricism is a mild word. He turns his back completely on New York, and that is wholly false. He sees only the West—possibly because he thinks he can prevail with the simpler and more provincial minds of most of the comrades, and play upon their prejudices.

His workers clubs idea—that is, his conception—doesn't strike me so hot. I'm for clubs—where we have also built an Opposition base or League. Concretely: Capelis has been working with contacts in Paterson, textile workers, ex-Party and YCLers and new elements. Apart from the question of union work, what shall we do. Cannon advised Capelis to form a workers club, not so much as breathing about a League unit. There's a slant to his opportunism. He's looking, like other opportunists, for a mass movement, no matter what—though it can't be gotten this way.

Has it ever struck you, that as Cannon possibly conjures, the workers club conception he holds has the germs of the labor party idea? Think about it a while. What the Minneapolis opportunists won't do with the "broad" conceptions brought forward is plenty. Their brands of opportunism will run wild.

Another thought: Have you noted that as the Party neglected or lost out in its work in the unions, the AFL, etc., it turned to building all kinds of auxiliaries, like the ICOR, workers clubs, IWO, alleged new industrial unions, etc., as a means toward mass work.⁵²³ Actually, it brought the opposite—no mass contacts or work. It isolated the Party among these alleged or real left-wing elements and separated them from the mass of workers in the AFL and elsewhere. In brief, this way of building new organizations, clubs, etc., was the manner in which sectarianism was the outcome.

I do not say it has to be. But some of Cannon's notions can result, if accepted, in the League putting in its time on such club building, etc., that work in the AFL, etc., is really let go. These are only germinating notions. Give them consideration.

I'm opposed to the new paper, the *Rebel*. That is, the sound-

est procedure is to develop the *Militant* in the proper sense as a mass organ and revive our project of the theoretical organ, the *International Communist Review*. If still another paper can be established in the West, we can give it consideration, and then not something like Muste's *Labor Action*. But just what can be considered on its merits.

This fellow abandons New York. Here everything is crystalized, he says: AFL, Party, SP, etc. Nothing can be done for a long time. Is that a reason for turning one's back, even if it were true, which isn't the case. Listen, Al, don't also make the mistake of just dismissing the East. Cannon can dismiss it because he's thoroughly discredited in New York—and properly so—and nearly all comrades see through his eclecticism, crude factionalism, narrow political vision, and whatnot. So he wants none of it. You understand, I'm not discussing what the West can do, especially Chicago. I'm speaking against the negative approach of Cannon. He gives up work in the Party very easily here by just proposing the League walk off to Chicago. Well, one can't dismiss easily the matter of the LO center in New York so long as the Party is here, and the relation of forces is as it is, and objective circumstances are as they are. I leave aside Cannon's motivations for his proposal to move to Chicago, though be assured they have to be considered, if one isn't to blunder in working out policy and programs of work.

However, I intended not to deal with these matters in this letter; so please consider them as hastily jotted down ideas, but worth considering properly nevertheless. I'm taking a few days off of necessity—but finding myself writing innumerable letters—but shortly we are to decide on the numerous proposals raised. I might say in passing that Cannon attributes agreement with his proposals to all of you, which is indeed amazing. I made no comments, but said I would consider all of them. I don't believe we should rush to decide these matters, but allow time for thought, and I think Max should also have the chance to consider them before a decision is made.

To return to my original remarks. Swabeck reported to the branch last Saturday; I was not present, being occupied with the disposition of Eastman's film to a producer.⁵²¹ In essence he made the same report to the branch, although put more mildly in some places, but taking a few hours to do it in.

In view of Swabeck's categorical declarations of political victory

of his faction at the National Committee meeting—to which I give one, loud, roaring horselaugh and Bronx cheer—we thought it would be well for Trotsky to know exactly what Swabeck says, so we proposed that a stenogram be taken of the branch proceedings. Our comrades approached Swabeck and Cannon before the meeting on this matter, hoping to arrive at agreement; Swabeck, as always, was wishy-washy, but said he saw no objection (not the advantages—MA); Cannon was against. We said, well, put it to the branch. The branch accepted, Cannon and Swabeck et al. abstaining.

And what a tough day Swabeck had, as the reports came back to me. I hope we can get the stenogram soon. He was plied with questions of every description, and how embarrassing they proved. He was compelled to squirm, wiggle, change, modify, and what-not his original remarks he reported; for the facts confounded him on every side. His remarks on the Red Army and Illinois miners, for instance, were greeted by plain laughter, for here the comrades knew the facts, and Cannon didn't open his mouth when Swabeck's assertions on various matters, including these, were flatly disproved. I wrote Max thereon and told him we would brook no acceptance of the Swabeckian assertions, even as modified, from over there. And I have an idea that Max will take up the cudgels. Again, I say, anyone who thinks the Dane is different is nuts. The baloney slices the same, thick or thin. He's still Cannon's Friday. Changes aren't observable as yet; we shall see, though I hope that the attempted solution of the faction struggle will prove fruitful all around and make possible the needed collaboration.

Cannon repeated at the branch meeting in a few words what he had reported at the NC.

The branch elections, Tuesday, July 4: about 20 absent, Cannon, Swabeck, myself—almost entirely Cannonites and ourselves. A good attendance nevertheless. Those elected are: Matheson 42 votes, Geltman 38, Weber 35, Saul 35, Milton 33, Lewit 32, Bleeker 32, Kitt 31, Gardanis 29, Field 25, Carter 25.

All our candidates except Sterling elected; he lost by one vote due to stupidity on part of our comrades in voting on a previous tie among three. That is, our comrades voted for two of the three tied comrades, instead of for Sterling only. But that result is only incidental. The branch, it was demonstrated, is more than ever in bulk for our basic group and its policies.

But the results had certain aspects of another character.

So resentful was the branch against Stamm's report and his ways that it defeated him; he got 22 votes. We wanted to elect three Cannonites. Only one, Kitt, was elected, with 31 votes. He is a good worker and the fact that he received such a good vote shows that the branch reacted favorably toward the good elements, no matter what faction title they were. But the Cannonites deliberately put up poor candidates, hoping and expecting to be defeated and thus giving them an excuse for obstruction in the future. I was for electing three anyway, good or bad, and then putting them to the test and showing them up in the work. But the branch here has had enough of monkey business, so it set aside good tactics and voted for good people. The Cannonites, for instance, put up also Shulman and Schwalbe, who have done little or nothing in the branch. Even the Cannon followers revolted (and they can muster close to 25 votes if all are present). Shulman got *four* votes and Schwalbe *eight*. There was a revolt in their faction, all right, against such monkey business on the part of the Cannon faction leaders. Some of the Cannon supporters voted for Field, or he would have been defeated. This group in its own right musters exactly seven votes and is very little thought of politically. In fact, it is the weakest excuse for a group I have ever witnessed, its political and organizational ineptness being quite distinct. The Field group, for your information, consists of Field, E. Field, Kaldis, Pappas, S. Weiner (Pappas's wife), Gardanis, and Carr. Anyway, the branch results are satisfactory, except for the failure to elect more of the Cannonites, instead of falling for the cheap trick of Cannon—that is, to be defeated because of putting up miserable candidates and then to obstruct. And my prediction is already borne out. Morris Lewit told me that Matheson had been approached by Cannon, who protested the results of the election and that "We would see about this." Well, it's the same old hokum and Cannon. Matheson laughed at him; for here one observes how these things happen, and Cannon will be in for the time of his life, even though some of his crap may go elsewhere, if he raises the matter of the election results. As a matter of political judgment, I would have had any of his nitwits elected, but now that it is over, any attempts at demagogic and fake protests will meet with some pretty sharp comments and exposure from me and others—and that means almost everyone here.

I'm very glad to hear about Chicago's progress and the news

about the mining situation. You know it can't be gotten from Cannon, that is, the information that's needed. I agree with your standpoint; Max arrives at the same ideas from across, as you will note from his letter when you receive it.

By chance, at the NC meeting a piece of interesting information came out, illustrating the Master's ways. In inquiring about the mining situation and after Swabeck's claims, Cannon mentioned that he had sent his reply to our motions on the miners to Trotsky, but had not given it to us. Isn't that a stunt? He writes across, Christ knows what, and we can lick our chops. I haven't seen his reply as yet. I can quite imagine it will be interesting. I wrote Max to be sure to ask LD for it. What a man!

I heard from Maurice Spector yesterday. As usual, just didn't get round to it. He says:

A note to assuage your anxiety. I am working on a lengthy report for the resident committee and a letter that will serve to inform our friends. I had no difficulty in voting for the resolution of the International Secretariat. Certainly we cannot be the losers. Perhaps it is best after all that the differences should have come to so sharp a head. It will clear the atmosphere. You will always remember that we always warned of the danger of a "preventative split" that the outside world would not understand and the necessity of a sufficiently clear-cut difference of policy and principle. Nor can these be improvised on the basis of anticipation only. But permit me to express a caution with regard to this new "third party," the "solid and honest," "nonpartisan and progressive conciliators." Some no doubt are unimpeachable in motive and aim. Others I deeply distrust. What you write about Field is symptomatic. Have we a new little faction leader with a Napoleon complex?...The Krehm rumors that Field spreads are nonsense (reply to some questions from me—M). Krehm and Joel were received into the group only after they had handed in a statement in which they recognized their accusations of last summer as essentially false and unreservedly withdrew their slanderous statement.

Maurice Quarter also writes, in part: The general spirit of Max's letters seem to me to be a healthy and constructive one; agree with his observation of the Weisbord faction (remind me to write later on Weisbord—M); agrees with characterization re Carter.

Will continue this letter later; meanwhile sending this on to you. I presume you send out such information as you think is required from contents of my letters to Angelo, St. Louis, etc. Or don't you? Use your judgment. In this letter there might be quite a few things for you to shoot to others.

A Possible Leap Forward

Letter by Arne Swabeck to the
International Secretariat and Leon Trotsky⁵²⁵

10 July 1933

Since my return I have reported to the National Committee and so far also to the New York branch membership upon the results of my visit to Europe and the discussions with the comrades of the international movement, including the agreement arrived at between comrade Shachtman, myself, and the international plenum. The National Committee adopted a resolution for the liquidation of the factional situation, copy of which is enclosed herewith. This resolution has also been adopted unanimously by the New York branch membership. I think it is possible to say without hesitation that among the comrades there is manifested a will to carry out the provisions of this resolution. The future should show the extent to which this assumption is justified.

The comrades of the majority tendency also accepted the criticism made by comrade Trotsky of a number of actions taken.

Within the New York membership, the factional situation had remained quite intense up until this point. In the units outside of New York, much less so. To a large extent that is due to the difference of position of our League units, their relationship to the Party and to the labor movement. In New York the movement as a whole, especially the trade unions, are rather definitely divided into the most extremely conservative AFL type, Socialist unions, and Party-controlled unions, with the result that it is easier for the Party to keep the Left Opposition within a certain isolation. In the rest of the country this is much less marked. The various streams intermingle more; united-front movements assume a more genuine character and the Party exclusion policy is much less effective; it is weaker there and our units, where they exist, become more drawn into the class struggle and are able to approach nearer toward equal terms with the Party within the general movement. This last-mentioned development has afforded us some new

experiences and some new lessons from which we are drawing certain conclusions for new steps forward for the League.

But before I come to that, a word about the Chicago Free Tom Mooney Congress and on the Illinois miners developments. The Mooney congress had more than 1,000 delegates present, a fairly good section being from trade unions. It had more of the real appearance and substance of a united-front movement than anything seen here for a long time. But the Stalinists, of course, had the political domination. They tried to run it in their usual style of speechmaking, to adopt an empty resolution and pack the leading committee to carry on the work under its exclusive control. The Left Opposition, however, raised the question of program, of broadening the united front, and proposed a concrete line of activities. It compelled them to elect a resolutions committee, to put comrade Cannon on the official slate, and to incorporate about two-thirds of our proposals into the official resolution. Cannon made a minority report for the resolutions committee against the "nonaggression pact," but the Stalinists were nevertheless compelled to put him on the official slate for the permanent executive committee. A good section of the trade-union delegation attended the Left Opposition congress caucus, among them a block of delegates from the Illinois miners. It was the pressure of this block of delegates which became so effective, even to the point of threatening the Stalinists with withdrawal, should they fail to include the Left Opposition on the permanent committee. These delegates estimated the congress as having shown two distinct political forces, the official Party and the Left Opposition, the former naturally being numerically the strongest. The Lovestoneites made no impression whatever.

During these activities an agreement was also reached with comrade Allard of the Illinois miners. He naturally wanted to remain with the Left Opposition and carry out its policies. The agreement is a compromise to the extent that it does not demand from Allard that he shall stand out openly as a Left Oppositionist at this time, but he is to make clear his position toward the Party, to definitely take up the fight against the conservative block of the union leadership, and to lead in the organization of a left wing within the union. This fight is coming to a head as rapidly as anybody could wish for. Allard has already been removed by the union general executive committee from the editorship of the *Progress*

sive Miner. The biggest local branch, composing 2,500 members, at its subsequent meeting, with this whole executive committee present, adopted a left-wing resolution in support of Allard and against the removal. A left wing is crystallizing within the union.

The whole country is "falling in line" with the industrial recovery efforts of the Roosevelt administration and with the preparations for an offensive upon Europe. The recovery act and subsequent developments will undoubtedly tend to facilitate unionization on a large scale with the general stream gravitating toward the conservative unions and not toward the red unions, but nevertheless with struggles developing. There are now many signs pointing in that direction. Apparently the Stalinists intend to continue their RILU policy to be fitted into their present opportunist trend. There are signs pointing toward a working-class awakening; but in the main benefiting the Socialist Party, adding new leftward-developing recruits to its ranks, recruits which the official Party cannot attract. It is our estimation that the objective conditions are ripening for a new leap forward by the Left Opposition.

In accordance with this, our ideas are taking shape aided by the recent experiences. Roughly speaking, it is an orientation in the direction of placing more emphasis upon the creation of an independent movement built around the Left Opposition as its nucleus. We conceive of the creation of broad workers clubs, patterned according to the possibilities of local conditions and functioning as auxiliary organizations; in some places, the creation of unemployment organizations upon our initiative. In connection with this and as a means of its realization, we are discussing the creation of a mass agitation organ; naturally, maintaining our political organ, the *Militant*. These ideas are so far only in the discussion stage, but appear to meet with the agreement of the membership and without any differences having developed at this point. It should be possible to center the coming conference discussion around these issues and to bring them to their natural conclusion. As we work these ideas into a concrete program, you will of course be informed.

If the present course toward unity in the League succeeds, which I believe is possible, we should be able to move forward.

A Radical Change Is Necessary

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Albert Glotzer⁵²⁶

12 July 1933

I want to write you again about the very dangerous situation in the League. The crisis is typical of the transition from one stage of development into another. But there have been examples in the history of human society when the crisis of transition became so acute and absorbed so much strength, that society, instead of marching forward, collapsed. The same result has been observed, much more frequently, in the history of political organizations. I am afraid that a similar fate threatens the League.

Everybody accepted the resolution of the plenum of the International Secretariat. But nothing has changed. I do not contend that the blame for this rests with any one individual or with either of the two groups. The situation is such, that without new factors or methods, the automatics of the internal struggle will paralyze the best will. Comrade Cannon proposes a radical change in the character of the work, beginning with transfer of the seat of the National Committee. Comrade Shachtman showed me your letter on this question and expressed some doubts on his own part to the proposition. It is naturally impossible to assert that the proposal is a panacea. Everything depends upon the material efforts in the new direction. But the proposals open up a perspective containing new possibilities and *can* become salutary under certain conditions, especially if they receive general support.

The very fact of the transfer of the center into a new milieu and into a new atmosphere will have a favorable effect. The most disturbing point of friction lies in the relations between the National Committee and the New York branch. The transfer of the center will signify that the New York branch will become, to a certain degree, more independent, but at the same time it will be charged with more responsibility. Its energy must be concentrated around revolutionary tasks in the great field of its activity. On the other hand, the National Committee will devote the greater

part of its time and energy to directing the work among the miners and the working masses in general.

Even should the work—in New York as well as in Chicago—be actuated to a great degree by factional motives, it would nevertheless not have a disintegrating effect upon the League. Quite the contrary. By winning over new worker elements, it can change entirely the present complexion of the struggle, the internal atmosphere in the League. New tasks will engender new political questions, and new questions will produce new alignments. And that would be the real salvation.

Some comrades say, quite sincerely, that the League is not prepared for such a radical change in its activity (the transfer of the National Committee, the new popular paper, the mass clubs, etc.). But what is meant by “preparation”? On the existing basis, the continuous preparing of a change is only the preparing for death. There are situations in which a hazardous step is unavoidable. I do not deny that there is some danger in the radical change, but it is impossible to avoid a *great* danger without *any* danger.

All the other considerations (New York is the center of political life, of the Party, the printing plant question, etc.) are of secondary importance. The League does not desert New York, for the New York branch continues to function there, and let us hope it will extend and deepen its activities. The latest experiences of the Comintern throughout the world show that we must turn our face more in the direction of the masses than of the Party. The printing plant question is a technical one and must be subordinated to the political one.

I know from your letter that you personally agree with the idea of the transfer to Chicago and I am glad to learn this. But it is quite necessary that all your friends who take a position against moving should understand that by such a purely negative stand they will inevitably bar the road to the way out and compromise their own group.

This letter is a purely personal one, but you may, if you find it advisable, show it to your friends. I have not consulted the International Secretariat about the questions involved, but I believe that my views move along the lines of the latest decision of the secretariat.

I Won't Make an Issue of Chicago Move

Letter by Max Shachtman to Martin Abern⁵²⁷

13 July 1933

In four days we set sail for France and the news ought to reach you in the public print before this letter does. The national conference of the French Ligue is to be held August 11-13 and I plan to attend it. From there, I shall take the first boat to New York offered me by the French Line, which should bring me back to the States before the end of that month.

Your June 28 letter I found rather instructive. That Swabeck should reiterate his adherence to the Cannon faction is not too surprising. Here, and in his conversations with me, he assured me, of course, that he would do everything in his power to ameliorate the situation in the League, and that in doing so he would not follow any factional lines or course. Now whatever course he actually does pursue is not of decisive importance in this sense: If he follows the path he outlined here, well and good, for himself, for us, and for the League as a whole; if he follows an opposite course, if he sinks—or is pushed back—into the old faction morass, then it will not be so good, either for himself or for the League. Swabeck really has a rare opportunity at the present time: to act as a mediator in the present situation. Not in the “contemptuous” sense of the word, of a man hopelessly attempting to reconcile extremes, but of one cutting loose from personal and factional ties and really trying to steer such an objective course as factions are usually incapable of steering, regardless of how good their intentions may be. Yet, taking Stamm—one of the most venomous factionalists I have ever seen in or outside of the old Party fights—under his protection is a disquieting sign, especially for Swabeck. I cannot say that it is entirely unexpected. Trotsky has a good opinion of Swabeck's honesty and sincerity, and there is undoubtedly a solid element of those qualities in the man. But the addition of that negative quality, which consists in an inability to stand on his own feet which he thinks is overcome by the fact that he is pulled

along at every important turn by the firmer views and acts of Cannon, makes a bad physiological-political admixture. Swabeck has told me (1927 was the first time and when I met him in Paris, he told me for—I think—the fifth time) often enough, with a sort of defensive resentment, that the current opinion held about him as to his blind support of Jim Cannon does not coincide with the truth; in fact, he told me in Paris, with the openness of a man released for a while from a certain restraint, that Cannon was very subjective and reacted personally to political criticism, etc.; that he did not believe in any one leader for the American League; and more of the same. Knowing Arne and having heard the same in one form or another from his lips before, I took it *cum grano salis*. I have too frequently heard a man proclaiming at last his superiority to the temptations of drink, his success in having broken himself of the habit, only to disappear from the midst of his companions as soon as a saloon was passed.

Take, for example, his assertion that Trotsky believes the majority is composed of the older labor element, experienced in trade-union and mass work, whereas the minority consists of the younger, inexperienced elements. I am writing this sentence just after a three-minute conversation with LD, who happened into my room. I had showed him your letter before and he read it over carefully. When he was through, he urged me to read the "protocol" of the meeting at which Swabeck reported on the American situation and Trotsky made his comments—so that I might know what Trotsky actually said during the discussion with Swabeck. Today, Trotsky repeated to me: "Did you read the protocol? I have not corrected the stenogram of my remarks, but I remember distinctly that I expressed myself very cautiously (*vorsichtig*). I said, as I have said to you on other occasions, 'Let us assume that this or that is so' or 'I picture to myself the situation to stand this way or that' (*Ich stelle mir vor*). Naturally, I do not know the comrades, or the composition of the groups; I have no statistics at hand." And for that matter, how could such an assertion be made? It is true *in part*, of that there is not the slightest doubt. Cannon, Swabeck, Dunne, and Skoglund are older, and have been in trade-union work more than you, Spector, Glotzer, and I. But to consider you, let us say, and Spector, Edwards, Weber, Lewit—to mention but a few—as "young, inexperienced" comrades would be to stretch matters a little, eh?

As for what Swabek so euphemistically calls the “organizational intransigence” of the majority, I continue to consider it of tremendous importance. I call those “mistakes” of the Cannon group the mistakes of bureaucratism (or as LD called it “sectarian bureaucratism”), or to adopt the happy phrase of Weber, “ultimatism” (you will note from the protocol that LD employed exactly the same expression). For Swabek to declare that the Cannon group was declared correct on the “principled” or “political” questions—when they have been shouting from the housetops that there were no principled or political differences—is to claim a victory in a battle that was never fought. It is in the “organizational policy” of the Cannon group, which caused the increasingly sharp situation in the League, that lies concealed a good deal of what is wrong with the Cannon group. When it is said that it pursued a policy of ultimatism toward the League, what does that signify? What is one of the concomitants of ultimatism, most frequently at any rate? It does not fall from the skies (as Cannon would put it, there are no accidents in politics...) and it is not some individual aberration. It is the characteristic of either ignorance or incompetence or uncertainty. The ignorant leader demands antedated acknowledgment of his leadership; the leader uncertain of the correctness of his policies demands by ultimatum—and not on the merits of a discussion in which he can hold his own fairly well—that his policy or leadership be acknowledged. Ultimatism—in politics as a whole as well as in internal organizational politics—signifies that what has to be won in struggle (ideological or otherwise) is considered as already established and as something which must be recognized a priori. If Swabek were really objective, he would call a spade a spade, he would call his mistakes ultimatic, and, what is extremely important and significant, he would trace this ultimatism not to some chance phenomenon or cause, but to its direct root: the theory of gestation. The connection is not only obvious (*il saute aux yeux*, as the French say: “It leaps to the eyes”), but it is inescapable, or as the philosophers say, there is a logical, causal connection between the two. The future will surely show how profound is the significance of this connection, of that I am deeply persuaded; but *only* the future will show it *plainly* and *unmistakably* to *all*. From this it also follows that we, for our part, should avoid an ultimatism of

another sort: We cannot, it is now clear, demand of others that they should acknowledge as a fundamental characteristic of the Cannon group that which *we* by *our* experience, *our* reflection are convinced is its distinguishing mark. You see, despite what the gifted Vanzler calls my capitulation (!) to Cannon, I have not changed my mind about what he is and what he stands for and what he means for the Opposition. I have, I admit, changed my mind some, under the influence of LD and the European comrades, on the question of the tempo at which my opinions and yours will—more accurately, *can*—become the opinions of other comrades. The “new” tempo demands patience and a long-range view. And it ought to be plain that after what has happened in recent times in world politics, the work of the Marxists in general must now be adjusted on a basis that also requires patience and a long-range view. Now as to some other questions, which are more urgent.

I am enclosing to you the copy of the protocol of the discussion mentioned above. I would have translated it for you under ordinary circumstances, but I haven't even been in Prinkipo for the last two days: running about in Istanbul to consulates, shipping agencies, and the like. LD has given me the permission—very graciously—to send it to you. I gave him my word of honor that it would not be used for “factional propaganda,” but would be sent only for your information and for the other leading comrades. The report of Swabek's remarks is absolutely accurate, having been checked by him in person. Trotsky's remarks, while of course rather faithfully reported and entirely valid as a picture of his views at that time, were not corrected by him. What is most instructive in Swabek's report, you will learn from reading it. If I still retained the capacity of moral indignation at what Arne is capable of doing, here would be an opportunity to give vent to it. Two examples: 1. After having accused us in the States of driving to a split, he really threatens to split himself; 2. We are stated to have voted for the co-optations at the plenum. Is it worth while taking up LD's time with a refutation of such...ahem...exaggerations? I am thinking about it, and in all likelihood I shall leave LD a written memorandum before my departure which will deal with a number of Swabek's positive misrepresentations, shall I say?

More important than such pettifogging: the question of the

new "Cannon program." The enclosed copy of a letter by LD to AI gives you some indication of how the matter stands so far as the former is concerned. But permit me to elaborate.

I have already written you on LD's views concerning the move to Chicago. He is thoroughly in favor of it for these reasons: orientation toward the unorganized (but Communistically organizable) masses, and away from the decaying Party (and in my opinion too, it is decaying internationally as a Communist organization, the U.S. not excepted); separation of the center from the New York branch, the coincidence of the two causing the greatest amount of friction in the League. Now, I am far from convinced as to the correctness of the argumentation; more exactly, I remain opposed to the proposal. Not because of the so-called "print shop argument," which is entirely subordinate and technical, but for political reasons. The Fosterites gave somewhat similar arguments in 1927, but I recall that our faction voted *for* moving to New York, and the Party did not become "less proletarian" as a result. On the contrary, in certain respects, with the center in New York the Party participated far more in the mass struggles throughout the land. That despite much of the Fosterite "proletarian demagogy" for Chicago. And you will recall that the notorious "Northwest orientation," the Farmer-Labor Party maneuvers, the whole Pepperiade, occurred under the Chicago-as-the-center period.⁵²⁸ This does not mean that a Chicago center *necessarily* leads to a petty-bourgeois (i.e., opportunist) deviation; but it does mean that a Chicago center does *not necessarily* lead to a "proletarian orientation." The same holds true in connection with the problem of the friction between the National Committee and the local branch. In New York, contrary to the tradition of the Communist and socialist movements in that city, we have an overwhelmingly proletarian composition: no doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers, drugstore owners, and similar parasites. The petty bourgeois-arriviste element we learned to detest in the Lovestone camp is concentrated in the single person (all three form but one whole) of Stamm-Gordon-Clarke, i.e., the local Cannon leadership (you may even add Basky, if you wish, and to a certain degree, Field). Yet the NC majority is in violent struggle with the New York branch. Because it is New York? That is not even an important factor. *If the Cannon group pursues the same policy as it has in the past*, after it has moved to Chicago, it will engender the same friction with the membership of the *Chicago*

branch, and it would not surprise me to find its local leadership *there* confined largely to the drugstore owner Mashow and similars. But the miners? LD says that the miners is where we have our opportunity *now* and it must be exploited to the maximum. Good. But tomorrow we shall have struggles of a similar nature in that hotbed of potential struggle, the *most highly concentrated industrial area in the entire world*: along and around the eastern seaboard, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, upper Pennsylvania. Will we then move the center back to New York? Illinois, contrary to some superficial views, is not the industrial center of the U.S. In actual fact, Illinois is the *agricultural* center of the U.S. (did you know that it is the largest corn-producing state in the country?), geographically speaking. The industrial center of the country is east of Pittsburgh. Not West Frankfort (tremendously important as it is and will continue to be, tremendously important, I repeat) will be the model or the central figure in the coming struggles, but rather "Gastonia," i.e., the untrained, raw, new, unspeakably exploited masses of the totally unorganized East (New Jersey, with its textile, chemical plants, oil plants, metallurgy, is alone a gold mine for tomorrow's battles) and the South.⁵²⁹

Therefore, as summary, I consider: The move to Chicago—despite the opinion of LD and my dear friends whose opinion I value highly (Edwards, Giganti, Glotzer, etc.)—is politically incorrect. Do I conclude therefrom that I am going to fight the proposal with all my might? Under ordinary circumstances, yes, absolutely. Under present circumstances, no. Opposition would be misunderstood and the misunderstanding is understandable. LD says, regardless of its motives, the Cannon faction is proposing a progressive move; even some of your friends welcome it and even claim the original initiative (letter from Al); even assuming that Cannon's motive is factional, I (i.e., Trotsky) say that it appears that the faction interests of Cannon coincide with the interests of the League as a whole; he proposes a program and all you have is a negative position?

This argumentation is sound at least to this degree: If, let us assume, we were to defeat the proposal to move, the experience would not be made and the lessons could not be drawn for all to see. As the move would not (could not) be fatal to the League, it is permissible to permit the experiment. Consequently, I draw the following conclusion: As for myself, I shall express myself in plain

enough speech that I consider—not the orientation to the masses—but the question of moving to Chicago a political mistake, for this and that reason. At the same time, I do not want to prevent the majority from making the attempt. Result: I make my statement, I abstain from voting against, and I do not vote for it, thus not assuming the responsibility (politically) for the moving or its consequences. An abstention in this case is warranted and justified. Those comrades who are as firmly convinced as I am, but in a contrary sense, like our Chicago friends, have of course the duty and right to vote in favor. The question of moving to Chicago cannot and must not become a factional issue.

But Cannon is turning his back on the Party, it can be said, and I have said so. But in the first place, that is not so serious today as it would have been a year ago: The change in quantity is becoming a qualitative change. In the second place, a political question cannot be evaded by mechanical measures, that is, the Party cannot be “escaped” from, so to say, by moving away from it. Stalinism is not a New York phenomenon, but an international phenomenon, reaching even—even—to Illinois (as we pointed out in the miners’ discussion and as is being confirmed so clearly by events). The Party is just as dead and just as alive, and just as capable of pernicious resuscitation, in New York, as in Chicago, as in Seattle. Even a corpse—and it is not yet quite that in the United States—if not decently buried can exude a most exasperating odor. In Chicago or in New York, we shall have to deal with Stalinism to one degree or another.

But he is also running away from the New York branch, and there will actually be two centers established, it can be said further. The fact is, there are practically two centers now: the Cannon faction in the NC and the majority of the New York branch. As for running away from it, Trotsky asks: Why should you be so concerned? In Chicago, the majority will have to demonstrate its ability to organize the masses into the League, and in New York the branch will have the opportunity, unhampered by the direct friction with the NC, to demonstrate what it can do by itself, so to speak. And so far as this particular point is concerned, Trotsky is absolutely correct! I subscribe to his argument heartily. Without the direct contravention of the work of the branch by the Cannon faction leaders (I take it that the second layer of leaders—save the mark!—will make a beeline to Chicago, if the center is moved, in

somewhat the same manner as the '49ers rushed to California gold), the New York branch and the branches in the immediate vicinity—existing and to be organized—will flourish like the proverbial green bay tree. Trotsky has insisted that I go along to Chicago, to work in the center. Much as I would like to, it appears to me from here at least to be financially impossible. I exist grace only to Billie's job, which is tenuous enough as it is. Should I give up residing in New York, it means the end of Billie's job; for she can't get another, either in New York or Chicago, and in Chicago I shall not be able to find any work (something I can do in New York); the resultant situation would only bring demoralization in its train. I am not at all worried about New York developing a truly startling activity, once the direct factional sword of Damocles hanging over its head is removed. On that score, I really welcome the idea.

Consequently, if I may permit myself to give you my counsel, it would be: 1. not to tie anybody—under no circumstances—to a faction vote on the question; 2. to try and postpone a final decision until my return; 3. to abstain—no vote against, no vote for—with the declaration as to why no political responsibility can be assumed for the step; 4. not to make an issue out of it. The recorded statement and the experience of the future—combined—are more than enough, as matters stand.

As for the other important point in the Cannon program, I should be considerably surprised if any of *our* comrades should oppose it. Make the *Militant* a more theoretical organ and establish a new popular organ for mass distribution? *By all means!* I told Trotsky somewhat ruefully that this is a rather belated "discovery," as we had proposed a year and a half ago to establish the theoretical monthly review and convert the *Militant* into a popular paper, only to have the proposal sunk without a trace for factional reasons. Trotsky quite naturally replied: If it is "your" proposal, then all the more reason why you should endorse it, even if somebody else makes it now, regardless of his "motives." And that too is absolutely correct. Why in god's name should we oppose the proposition, when it is entirely in harmony with the line of action, the general orientation, that we have been fighting for in the past period, even when the issues involved only vaguely conveyed the essence of the dispute? Of course, when I say "endorse" I mean to endorse the essence of the proposal. I am

not so sure but that the original proposal looking toward a similar transformation was the better one, i.e., to establish a theoretical review and convert the *Militant* into a popular agitational organ. In fact, I am more inclined to the old form of "conversion" than to the one proposed by Cannon, although from a practical agitational standpoint, it also has its merits. What I am categorically opposed to is—as I understand it, I hope I am wrong—the proposal that the mass paper be not officially the organ of the League. We have no need or use for anonymous political organs under present conditions. It is radically false. The popular organ, like the theoretical organ, must be the organ of the League, openly. Trotsky is in agreement with this view: "We have no reason to hide ourselves," he remarked this morning. My only regret, to tell you the truth, is that it was not we who took the initiative in this proposal, how ever much the fact may be that we stood for it and fought for it in 1932.

Now as to the so-called mass clubs. I do not, of course, know the details of the proposition. But it is a field which permits a considerable degrees of experimentation, and I hope that nobody among us will be so permeated with sectarian conservatism as to oppose the idea in principle after having reflected on the matter to the end. In certain sections (perhaps New York and similar localities), the clubs may prove to be sterile and burdensome. Elsewhere, they may prove to be excellent recruiting grounds. Remember that in the Illinois miners' dispute, we formulated our ideas (even then a little narrowly in reaction to Cannon's complete formlessness and ambiguity) in a manner that permitted the organization of non-League workers clubs. Let me give you another concrete example: It is quite possible—more than that, it is likely—that in the beginning we shall have to do our organizing work among the Negroes through some such medium. I have been thinking a lot about the Negro work while on my trip, and I can visualize several approaches to the colored masses, one of which is a somewhat loose club form in which we have our leaven at work, moving gradually and in accordance with developments from a reliance purely upon our ideological superiority to the stage of organizational crystallization and control (control, of course, essentially of the workers). No doubt, there will be manifested some liquidationist tendencies in the carrying out of such a line; no doubt, a lot of rot and light baggage will encumber the clubs; no doubt, a

number of them will prove worthless. But we can more than afford to make the experiment. There are many lessons to be drawn from the *Unser Kampf*, Protomagia, and Chicago *Militant* clubs (my idea of the clubs, of course, is a rather broader organization even than those), and these lessons are not all negative, by any means.⁵³⁰ LD has the impression that our comrades are stiffly opposed to the club idea (which has no importance to him in itself, of course, but only as a part of a brusque orientation away from internal faction stagnation to broader fields of endeavor, admitting of experimentation, trial by error, so to say, boldness of initiative, etc.). It is significant, interesting, and instructive to hear what he has to say on that score. You see, Field (about whom further down in this letter) wrote him a putrid letter, opposing Chicago, the new paper, the clubs. LD said to me: Of course, I value Field's qualities and his capacities. But after all, he is a man without experience in the class struggle, without experience in the Communist movement. He came to us out of intellectual study and conviction. And it is very significant that Field is in accord with you on these questions, which involve a progressive move for the League. (I am not quoting literally, only the essence, and that faithfully.) He concluded jokingly, I vote for the Cannon faction. At the risk of being misunderstood (you won't misunderstand me, I know!) I say: Let's all vote for Cannon in this question and not for Field. The latter's talk about the need for "preparations" for the "turn," about the fact that this is all sudden and that the League is not oriented for it—is not merely factional but typically intellectualistic tommyrot. The League has been prepared for the genuine, serious, organized turn to mass activity for more than a year. We have been calling for it—formally and by a recorded statement since the document presented by us on the eve of the plenum—for almost a year and a half. Regardless of this or that point, regardless of this or that technicality in execution or even formulation—why in the name of all that is holy should we become doubting Thomases now? On the contrary, we should push forward in the turn, we should not only champion it in theory, but in the daily work of the League, for I am convinced that our comrades fit into it—not so well, perhaps, as such noted labor leaders as Sam Gordon and Stamm, but fairly well nevertheless. There is no need of becoming wild-eyed "mass work" maniacs or of engaging in a contest with Cannon to see who can propose a greater number of "mass

work propositions"; I need hardly emphasize this aspect of the question.

LD showed me a letter from Field and LD's answer. The former was really vulgar in its pathetic attempt to prove that the only real supporters of the Gourov letter were the members of Field's faction (he claims ten, doesn't name them—although he probably has them—but describes them as just one rung further down on the ladder from Lenin himself). He emphasizes his own well-known objectivity and indicates the superiority of his faction not by what it has accomplished or proposes to accomplish, but by vile attacks on the other groups. We, for example, are disintegrating. Shachtman's lieutenants (!) are sabotaging the trade-union work in NY, for which he proposes a "program" very solemnly copied from some Communist organization handbook for Pioneers. LD's answer is short and pointed. He writes him that his "third group" won't help a goddamned bit to solve the situation! (Apparently there are groups enough already!) As for his opposition to the Cannon proposals, which he expounds very pompously, LD separates himself from Field on this score too. I have a queer sensation that the famous Field group, which started out with such lofty aspirations and such surefooted confidence, has died aborning, as we used to say out West. Really, we would be foolish to lose more than a few nights' sleep over Field's factional elucubrations.

So much for the moment. I shan't be able to write till we get to France—too busy with packing, etc. Shall I find a letter from you to me, care of Naville, when I arrive in Paris? I cannot, by the by, tell you how I regret your decision about your work in the future, regret it very keenly. But that, like other matters, will have to wait, I suppose, till I return. Warmest greetings to you and all other stalwarts for whom the class struggle, and every other struggle, is a matter to be solved not in days, but alas! in years, and who do not grow impatient or change positions because of it.

Action Program of the Communist League

by the National Committee⁵³¹

[August 1933]

This undated resolution was marked "adopted by the National Committee."⁵³² The manifesto projected in point no. 1 appeared in the 30 September 1933 Militant.

In complete agreement with the proposals of comrade Gourov to change the position of the International Left Opposition, and with it of the League, from that of a fraction aiming at the reform of the Stalinist parties and the CI to that of a completely independent movement preparing the way for a new party, the NC sets the following tasks as a program of action to be accomplished progressively in the next period:

1. The issuance of a public manifesto announcing the new course of the League as soon as the League branches have had the opportunity to study the material and to express themselves on the question. The publication of the manifesto to signalize the opening of the public campaign for the realization of our program of action.
2. The removal of the national headquarters to Chicago.
3. The transformation of the *Militant* into a popular agitation paper, to be sold at a cheaper price and appealing directly to the mass of the American workers.
4. The establishment of a theoretical magazine to which the heavier and longer articles will be transferred.
5. The acceptance of members into the League on a broader basis than heretofore. Class-conscious workers agreeing with the general program of Communism or desirous of becoming Communists can be accepted even though they are not fully conversant with the faction program of the Left Opposition.
6. The systematic establishment of united-front relationships and joint class-struggle activities with other workers organizations, in particular with those groups with which we have some points of

agreement, and devoting particular attention to the dissident left-wing groups in reformist and centrist organizations.

7. The formation of nuclei within reformist and centrist political organizations, in some cases even sending League members into such organizations for this purpose.

8. The formation wherever possible of peripheral organizations on a broad basis, which will require only of applicants for membership a recognition of the class struggle and agreement to participate in it. The members of the League will work as fractions inside these organizations and endeavor to influence them in the direction of the League by ideological means.

9. The systematic registration of the League membership for enrollment in mass organizations of various kinds, above all the trade unions which have a mass character.

10. The strengthening of the central apparatus of the League by provision for the full-time employment of qualified comrades and the maintenance of at least one field organizer.

11. A series of tours by NC members, beginning with a tour of comrade Swabeck and followed soon afterward by tours of comrades Shachtman and Cannon.

12. The collection of a special fund to finance the above program of action and the execution of each project in order, as rapidly as the means are provided.

Implementing the Action Program

Letter by Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer⁵³³

7 September 1933

After the numerous letters I wrote to the comrades here during my stay in Europe, it would be pointless to recapitulate my views and the views of LD in particular in this letter. The more intimate details which rarely find a place in correspondence will have to be held in reserve for the time when I commence my tour and have an opportunity to see the comrades in the various cities in person. According to the present schedule, my tour ought to begin in about six weeks, and I am just as impatient to see all our friends as I understand them to be to see me. A few words, however, will be in place about what has been taking place since my return.

1. I delivered a report to the New York branch, the frankness and thoroughness of which can be gathered from the fact that most of it, or a large part of it at least, consisted of lengthy excerpts from the letters which I had sent here from Prinkipo. Not a single one of the Cannon faction took the floor in the discussion, and the only ones who were critical of it were the members of the so-called Field group, who have maneuvered themselves into the unenviable position of increasing the turbulence and violence of their interventions in the New York branch in inverse ratio to the diminution of the sharp faction fight between ourselves and the Cannon group. Swabeck told me later that he had no fault to find with my report.

2. The Gourov letters on the new orientation of the ILO, which you must have received by now, are by far the most important thing before the organization at the present time. I need hardly declare here that they represent my point of view entirely. The New York branch, by the way, to which I reported on the Gourov letters, will in all likelihood go on record unanimously for the standpoint unfolded in them. The tremendous historical significance of the step we are taking so boldly leaves one almost breathless upon reflection. We are taking a titanic task upon our shoulders and it

strikes me that this is just the right time for all closet philosophers and pessimists to step aside before they are shoved aside.

3. The program of action, also, you must already have received. I wrote you before that I cannot agree with the arguments given for moving the center to Chicago. I don't think they are tenable. However, there is one argument for it, and it is on this ground that I told LD, the National Committee, and the New York branch to which I reported on the subject, that I would not stand in the way of the execution of the proposal, that I would even help to carry it out, even though I would not vote for it and thereby assume responsibility for the step politically. The argument is that the National Committee and the New York branch must be separated; they constituted the sharpest point of friction; the separation will not only be good for both factions, but also for the League as a whole. This is essentially shrewd argumentation and has met a thoughtful reception from all our friends here, even those who were the sharpest opponents of the transference of the center.

It has been decided to issue the *Militant* in Chicago as a two-cents, same-size, popular mass organ for agitation among the workers. I must say that I seem to detect a tendency already to convert it into a sort of red *Appeal to Reason*, and I can't say that I am overenthusiastic about that tendency developing too far. But I am quite prepared to reserve judgment for a while, not to pre-judge the question, and to allow several numbers of the popularized *Militant* to appear before making up my mind as to what direction it is heading toward and whether or not it is the right direction.

In addition, of course, the theoretical organ *The New International* (I think it is a strikingly appropriate name; I'm proud to have thought of it—it was the name of Fraina's first left-wing paper in this country) is to be issued, about the size of the *Nation*, 32 pages, selling retail at ten cents. Cannon is to edit the *Militant* and I the theoretical organ.

The moving, the new *Militant*, and the magazine are to be accomplished within two months and a special drive for funds is being started, as you know. After some hesitation, the committee is now in a mood for as swift as possible a shift to Chicago, with which I am in accord. Cannon, Swabeck, Oehler, and in all likelihood Stamm and Clarke (perhaps one or two others) will be leaving for the West in a few weeks. Unfortunately, I am unable to join

them immediately, my personal conditions making this impossible. However, there is nothing fatal about this; on the contrary, it has some distinctly positive features. If everybody pulls out of New York at one blow, it may cause tremendous damage to the New York (and the whole eastern) movement. I myself am really anxious to concentrate on some organizational work for a change and devote myself at least for the coming period of several months to building up the movement in New York and throughout the East—and the prospects are truly magnificent. Thus, I am stating a sober figure—agreed to by all the serious comrades with whom I have spoken—that New York alone will have 200 members within six months—with the new orientation and the added advantage of the elimination or drastic moderation of the factional fight, toward which we are bending all our energies. Now is the time for proving everybody and the proofs will be furnished most clearly in an atmosphere of collaboration, absence of friction as much as possible, concentration on practical work.

My absence from the center for the coming period I cannot regard with any particular alarm. It will get on well enough without me, for the time being at the very least; besides, I shall be in constant communication with Chicago; besides, again, you and Johnny Edwards will probably both serve on the National Committee.

4. You ask about the committee taking a position on the NRA or on the Party's open letter.⁵³⁴ I might add several other problems which have been neglected (needle trades strike, etc.). You have the same old story for a reply. You should be quite familiar with the manner in which our committee functions by this time. As for the miners' situation, it has—admitted now by all—blown up *completely*, with reaction 100 percent triumphant. Allard has betrayed us again, having joined the CPLA. I have—despite comrade Trotsky, who is wrong on the situation, I am convinced—renewed my motion to expel Allard. So far the NC has not voted on it. Comrade Swabeck proposes that we make...another effort with Allard! I admire his patience, if I cannot admire his politics. As for us, we have *nothing* in southern Illinois. Please write me your views; I'll reply in greater detail next time.

A Big Mistake

Letter by Max Shachtman to Albert Glotzer⁵³⁵

19 September 1933

We have been unable to locate the Chicago local motions that Shachtman opposes with such alarm in this letter. Glotzer subsequently named Joe Giganti as their author.⁵³⁶ While the Chicago branch adopted the motion for an immediate national conference, the motion to postpone the move of the national headquarters failed in a tie vote. Glotzer insisted that the local had never intended to postpone the move. A subsequent Chicago branch meeting reiterated the call for a national conference, but adopted (with Giganti opposed) a motion to make the move immediately. The Chicago CLA had already secured a new office big enough to serve as CLA national headquarters.

Tonight the New York branch elections take place and I am concentrating all my attention upon them; consequently, I have the time to write you only briefly and to cover but one point. However, it is a point of such overwhelming importance that everything else pales beside it. If I write sharply I know you will understand that it is a reflection of the concern I feel over what is involved.

1. I think you have made a tremendous mistake. I think that Joe Giganti has made a similar mistake. I think that every one of the comrades associated with both of you in the last branch meeting action is equally responsible for the mistake. I refer to the motion and vote on the question of the national headquarters to move to Chicago and the proposal for the holding of an immediate national conference.

2. Why *must* the national office move *instantly* to Chicago? In order to avert a split in the Left Opposition. Have the Chicago statesmen taken this little trifle into consideration when they made motions, talked, and finally voted? No, they probably thought the prospect of a split to be nothing more than a phantasmagoria of Trotsky or Shachtman. Trotsky told me (not once, but day in and day out for three weeks!): "Unless the National Committee moves to Chicago, unless it is separated from the New York branch, where

the greatest point of friction is located, the American League is headed toward a split with express speed." Trotsky declared—and he is 100 percent correct—that the National Committee (i.e., the Cannon group, in essence) must be given the opportunity to organize the work of the League in Chicago unhampered by the constant attacks from the New York branch, that the New York branch (i.e., the minority group, in essence) must be given the opportunity to show what it can do here unhampered by the constant attacks of the Cannon group. If they continue, both under the same roof, they will "supervise each other" so closely that they will strangle each other and the League in the process. That is the reason, and the *only* reason, why I told LD that while I did not agree that Chicago was the more logical center for the movement, I would nevertheless not stand in the way of the proposal to move west, but would, on the contrary, work to convince all my friends to give the majority the chance to go through with its proposal.

3. "But the moving doesn't mean anything without Abern and Shachtman coming along to Chicago as well." Perfectly absurd! a. We will have our representatives on the National Committee in Chicago, that is, Glotzer and Edwards; b. Shachtman and Abern will be in constant touch with the national office; c. If you take away *every* leading comrade from New York at one single blow, New York would be left without *one single* public speaker for a mass meeting—ditto for the entire East, to say nothing of what else the New York branch would suffer—unless you think that Joe Carter or Morris Lewit or Philip Shulman could lead off at the mass meetings. In discussing prospects for the League, as involved with the moving, not a single Cannonite on the NC ever mentioned a word about what would happen to New York if we simply all got up and pulled out; that's understandable, because they don't care very much. I regret, however, to see you in such touching harmony with their ideas and outlook.

4. "But such an important orientation of the League should first be taken up at a national conference." Ridiculous! "What will happen at a conference if it is held immediately, as you insist?" Trotsky kept on asking me, until I began to realize that our insistence was pretty poorly founded. What would happen? It is not hard to picture it. There would be next to *no* discussion of the new problems of the League. There would be a violent cat-and-dog fight over

credentials, over what happened three years ago, and two years ago, and—the danger of an immediate split would confront every single delegate. Nothing more and nothing less. Do you comrades in Chicago think that the simple adoption of the secretariat resolution means that everything has been settled to the roots? No, it has merely made possible the *beginning* of a solution of the internal situation. Nothing more. I said in the NC that the conference should not be held right away, but that a few months should be allowed before it, during which the League would be given a breathing spell from the factional struggle, would be given the possibility of engaging in some really independent and general activity so that when the conference is finally called, it will look to the future and not merely to the past. A conference now, and have no illusions about it, dear Albert, would be a sad blow at the League and its orientation and its prospects for advancement.

5. “But such a decisive turn in fundamental policy, such a thing as moving to Chicago, ought to be decided by a conference.” Why? Please tell me why, because I am curious to find out. LD has already finished writing the public manifesto launching the new international. Our delegates to the Paris “Left Socialist-Communist” conference have already issued a public statement calling for the new international, etc., etc.⁵³⁷ But that is not good enough for us. We are very formal and very correct. We have read the constitution, which says it must be done differently. We want a conference to proclaim the turn. Why? Nobody knows, except the constitution. Of course a conference would be the best place to proclaim it, if there were a normal situation in the League. That’s the little trifle that Chicago has not noticed. There is no normal situation. Besides: *Exactly three-fourths of the membership of the League* (New York, Minneapolis, Boston, Newark, St. Louis, Kansas City, Berkeley, etc.—all unanimously without reservation) *have already endorsed the new turn and the program of action, including moving to Chicago!* Even to a meticulous comrade, that should be democratic enough, it would appear to me.

6. “But why are you so excited and angered?” Because our good friends in Chicago and Youngstown, despite what I thought was a plain enough letter from me, gave Cannon *precisely the pretext he has been seeking for quite a while in order to delay moving for an indefinite period!* All in one day, we received the letter announcing the

Chicago decision, a somewhat similar vote in New Castle, and almost the same thing from Youngstown, representing the views of comrades who if multiplied by two would not, numerically, amount to one-third of those who have already voted differently. Cannon has immediately snatched this up to write a circular letter to the League announcing that Swabeck and Oehler have already changed their minds about moving now, that they are in favor of a conference first and immediately, and that he, Cannon, is “leaning” in their direction. Translated into English, Cannon has decided to put off moving and has informed Swabeck and Oehler of his decision. Translated into practice, it means that all our plans for work in New York and the East—under nearly ideal conditions of the absence of the Cannon group as a disruptive factor—are instantly threatened. Cannon wants to stay here and “supervise” us. We in turn will “supervise” him. Even if the old faction fight does not break out in all its violence here as a result, at least you will have that extremely tense atmosphere in which all effective work is out of the question. Chicago will be piously reproachful at the incurable faction fighters of the East and will continue to repeat that if the national office were only in Chicago, all would be well. In this way, practically everybody will be happy and the League will be torn to little tiny pieces.

7. What do I propose (in agreement, of course, with all our friends here, not only of our faction, but of others who were equally alarmed by the latest developments) that you should do now? I ask you to call *immediately, today*, to see Johnny, Joe, Norman, and Natie, at the very least. That you show them this letter. Then *that a special meeting be called of the branch*, if possible, or if that is not advisable, to take up the question of the conference and the moving at the very next meeting and propose that the previous decision be changed. That the branch, unanimously if possible, go on record favoring the *instant coming of the NC to Chicago and the postponement of any conference talk*, because a conference now, despite your best intentions and my best wishes, would be *nothing* but what I described above. Anyone who is anxious for such a conference is welcome to have it, but pardon me if I reserve the right to oppose such a comrade. Finally, that the branch secretary, after such a meeting, inform the NC by air mail that the branch has taken a new decision, so that the shabby pretext of our newly baptized

“democrats” in the NC (who are so frightfully solicitous about not violating the views of about 15 comrades in the League, even though 150 have already voted differently), shall not continue to exist.

8. It should be added, in conclusion, that there are undoubtedly good reasons why Cannon has cooled off on the moving proposal. One or two of them are referred to above. Others include: the collapse of his big dreams about the southern Illinois fields, dreams which revolved around the new columnist of the CPLA weekly, our good comrade Gerry Allard; the fear that finances won't be so easy in Chicago; F. Martin's information from Chicago that the printing of the *Militant* will not be so cheap as Cannon first reported; the report that various branches (NY, Boston, Philly, Chicago, etc.) are taking the new turn seriously and are beginning to take headquarters, i.e., establish the preliminary centers without which real work is out of the question. But all these things are of little or no significance—so far as we are, or should be, concerned—in comparison with the most urgent need of the League: *Separate the national office from the New York branch and thus avert a split which would destroy the Left Opposition in America.*

I hope I have made myself comparatively clear and that you and the other comrades will act promptly and correctly. This is not a wild-eyed letter, but the result of a thorough discussion I had with other comrades, who, like myself, are quite sober and thoughtful. If my letter is needlessly harsh, pay no attention to that aspect of it; it is not the important thing.

Trade-Union Problems in America

by Leon Trotsky

23 September 1933

This article was sent to the International Secretariat with the request that the I.S. endorse and forward it to the sections in its name.⁵³⁸ Adopted by an ILO plenum on September 26, it was published in the ILO's English-language bulletin, International Bulletin of the League of Communist Internationalists New Series no. 1 (April 1934).⁵³⁹

The question of work in the trade unions continues to be of unusual importance in all countries. In the U.S. it arises on a wide scale for the first time at a moment when the entire national economic and political life is upset and when government policy is giving an impulse to the trade-union movement. It is not at all likely that government liberality with respect to the unions—not to speak of the present policy of planning in general—will continue for long. In any case one may certainly say that the liberalism of the administration with respect to the trade unions will not at once transform itself into liberalism on the part of the union bureaucracy with respect to Communists. Quite the contrary, not only the reactionary band of Green and co., but also the bureaucracy of the “progressive” trade unions will redouble their onslaughts against the revolutionary wing in order to show the White House that they fully merit its confidence and backing. There exists the great danger that in the present period of deep mass ferment and trade-union development, the Communists will again let themselves be isolated from the workers organizations. The trade-union bureaucrats can achieve this aim the more easily, because the Stalinist bureaucracy has gravely compromised Communism in the workers' eyes by its policy of ultimatism, commands, and impotence; this compromising will inevitably affect us too.

Wherever they are expelling Communists from trade unions, or may begin to do it tomorrow, it is not only permissible but even obligatory not to unfold the banner of Communism prematurely but to conduct “anonymous” revolutionary work. It may be objected

that such a method of work contains certain dangers within itself: By hiding its banner, the organization can, without noticing it, become unused to its own banner. Adaptation to an enemy and to the prejudices of the mass conceal in themselves the danger of degeneration into opportunism. All this is quite true. The party as a whole must act with its banner unfurled and name things by their right names. But in the given case we do not speak of the Party (League), but of its picked detachments working inside hostile trade unions. This is not at all the same thing. Communists working in trade unions, of course, cannot in any case disavow their party, that is to say, make statements opposed to its program and its decisions. But the Communist in the trade union is certainly not compelled to say everything that the party as a whole says.

The Communist working in a trade union is not forced to call himself a Communist at the top of his voice. The Party (League) can and should say fully in its press, in its mass meetings, in strike meetings, and general meetings of trade unionists, that which Communists inside the unions may not be able to say at any given moment. It is necessary to make a wise division of labor, in which the various parts of the political organization supplement one another.

Of course, this does not mean that Communists working inside trade unions can decide at their own pleasure the policy for work in the unions: *The whole political organization must decide what forms of adaptation to the trade-union situation are permissible and suitable.* The more difficult revolutionary work in the trade unions becomes, the more strictly systematic should be party control on its members in the trade unions. But this control can, and in the majority of cases should, be under present conditions strictly secret.

It is true that even when there is such control, "anonymous" work in the trade unions can lead to a contraction of the horizon and a lowering of the revolutionary level. There is only one means of guarding against this: Communists must not be *simply* trade unionists, but must at the same time do Party work outside the unions, even if secretly in order not to compromise themselves with the trade unions.

In many cases the Stalinists declared that they would agree to work in the trade unions, but on condition that they be granted in advance the right to have Communist fractions. Such "condi-

tions" are grotesque: To demand from the trade-union bureaucracy which is hunting for Communists that the latter be benevolently installed to work with the necessary comfort, threatening the bureaucrats that, if they refuse, the Communists will "strike," that is, refuse to do revolutionary work—to demand that is manifest nonsense. We must know how to work in the unions without comfort and without the authorization of the bureaucracy.

It is clear that Communists must be united in a fraction, but that fraction, while working on the basis of strict internal discipline, must in no case appear openly as a fraction, should the conditions be unfavorable to that (and in the majority of cases this is just the situation).

The Party (League) clearly must have a platform for trade-union work over any given period. It is necessary to know how to translate this platform into the language of the trade unionists in order to lead the masses forward more surely. The danger of what we call "tailism" (a real and serious danger) will be all the better avoided if the party as a whole will decisively supplement the work of its trade-unionist fractions.

It is absolutely clear, on the other hand, that such careful work in the unions should continue until the Communists have succeeded in proving to the workers that they are not Stalinist bureaucrats, obtuse ultimatists, but serious and able fighters who can be relied on and who consequently are worthy of trust. The more the influence of the Communist fraction grows in the union, the more boldly and openly will it fling out the banner of its party.

We sincerely hope that these basic considerations will be entirely approved by you.



Cannon Is Reneging

Letter by Max Shachtman to Leon Trotsky⁵⁴⁰

5 October 1933

In this letter Shachtman mentions his first report to Trotsky after his return, in which he asserted:

The situation in the League here has improved considerably since I left for Europe. The atmosphere of violent factional strife has changed radically and there is every indication that if the present plans for work are carried out to a fair degree, the internal fight will die down completely in a comparatively short space of time. I reported to the New York branch on the plenum and my discussions with you, and I encountered a virtually unanimous acceptance of what I had to say in my remarks.⁵⁴¹

There is a problem which has arisen suddenly in the League about which I want to write you, even if briefly and in haste. I have already written you as to how matters stood in the League following my return to New York and the report to the National Committee and the local membership. We were able, following these events, to arrive at a unanimous agreement in the National Committee on a program of action for the organization, as well as a united viewpoint on the new orientation of the International Left Opposition. The question of transferring the headquarters of the League to Chicago also encountered no particular difficulties at that time, in accordance with our discussions in Prinkipo, where I told you, as you will recall, that in spite of the fact that I did not entirely agree with the proposal, I would see to it that it did not become a subject of dispute in the League and that, so far as I was concerned, I would attempt to facilitate the proposal of the majority. We thereupon voted in the National Committee that the *Militant* would be transformed into a more popular paper by the end of October, that the theoretical organ would be issued at the same time, and that simultaneously, the National Committee would move to Chicago. To prepare the organization and the sympathizers for this campaign, it was decided to send out on a speaking tour comrades Swabeck, Shachtman, and Cannon, in the order named (Swabeck has already started out).

Subsequently, it was agreed, on my initiative, that I would have to remain in New York for a little while for two reasons: first, personal problems which make my moving to Chicago immediately a very difficult if not impossible thing; second, the abrupt removal of all the leading comrades from New York would leave the branch here without any outstanding comrades capable of directing the work. For this reason, it was agreed that the branch in New York, which has grown to 90 or more members, would be divided into three working units, and that in the elections of the city executive committee, I would take over the post of city organizer.

The only dispute that arose was in connection with the composition of the city committee. In an endeavor to arrive at an agreement, I proposed that it be constituted out of a majority (four) of those associated formerly with our group, two from the Cannon group, and one more or less independent comrade. The Cannon group proposed that none of the groups should have a majority in the committee. In view of the sympathies of the New York membership, I was unable to agree with the latter proposal. We have, as you know, made no proposals for any organizational changes in the National Committee; we took the position that the Cannon group must retain its present majority there and accept the main (but not the whole) responsibility for the leading of the committee for the next period. In the same spirit, we proposed that the New York organization's committee should not be submitted to organizational changes either—that is, the minority group should be given the main (but not the whole) responsibility, so that it could also be tested in the coming period. In this viewpoint, I believe we followed the spirit of the discussion you and I had in Prinkipo on the “convenient division” of the work: The National Committee should be allowed to function from Chicago without factional interference and disruption; whereas the New York branch should be allowed to function in its own field in a similar manner, so as to be able to show what it is capable of accomplishing. The matter finally came before the branch membership and by a vote of approximately *two to one*, our proposal was endorsed and the city executive committee constituted accordingly.

You will remember my writing to you that on the basis of my report to the National Committee and the agreement arrived at, it was decided to postpone the national convention and move to

Chicago immediately. This was done so as not to throw the League into a fight for convention delegates from each faction, consequently converting the conference into a battleground of the contending groups, which would result in a sterile assembly, fighting over mandates and outlived differences, instead of discussing the problems confronting the Opposition. This decision, too, was in accordance with our discussions in Turkey.

Now, however, a change has taken place in this perspective. At the last meeting of the National Committee, comrade Cannon suddenly brought in a motion proposing that the moving to Chicago be held up for several months and should not take place until after a convention is held. He proposed an immediate convention, an immediate opening up of a discussion in the League, and the convention itself to be held this December. This means a radical change in our outlook and the perspectives of the League's work. I have not yet voted in the committee on this question. I intend to propose that before it is carried into effect, the National Committee should consult with the International Secretariat and comrade Trotsky in order to obtain their advice.

From a "faction" standpoint, if I may put it that way, I ought to have no objection to an immediate conference and the postponement of the move to Chicago. But from the standpoint of the interests of the League, I do not think it is the correct step to take. And that for the following reasons:

1. The new turn and the program of action of the League have been endorsed so far by every single branch and member in the country.
2. The proposal to move immediately to Chicago has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the membership. In three branches, some members expressed doubts about it (Chicago, Youngstown, New Castle). I immediately wrote a personal letter to these comrades, urging them to vote for the proposal of the National Committee so as to put no obstacles in the road. I am glad to say that in all three cases, the branches reconsidered their position and voted unanimously for the proposal to move.
3. The only branch that has thus far proposed to hold the convention immediately and then move to Chicago has been the Philadelphia branch, which is controlled by the group of comrade Cannon.

4. The new turn has been so enthusiastically accepted by the membership that the League now is doing more work than ever before in its history. In New York we are concentrating on putting every League member into a trade union (we placed six to seven comrades into unions in one week). In two unions, our comrades are the decisive element in the organization of the unorganized campaign. In other fields, the same story can be told. Our mass meetings for the new international have been the largest in our history. We are beginning to take new members in all three branches here. We are starting negotiations with the Gitlow group on the question of the new party.⁵⁴² And so forth and so on. If we announce immediately the convention call, it means that the factions will inevitably revive and begin the old struggle all over again, fighting for delegates in order to see who will get the majority at the convention. The convention itself will occupy itself mainly (perhaps exclusively—that is the logic of the struggle) with mandate questions and former disputes. The work of the League in the meantime will inevitably lag and a reaction against the present enthusiasm will probably set in.

I wrote my friends from Prinkipo that the main argument you made, which convinced me to take the position I did, was that the postponement of the convention and the move immediately to Chicago would enable both the majority and the minority to carry on League work in their respective fields and would avoid a convention now at which the split danger would be tremendously acute. I still incline to that view. I do not believe it necessary to expand on this question in writing to you, because it is you who furnished me originally with all the arguments which I am making now.

Comrade Cannon is arguing in letters to comrades that the situation has now changed, that before the National Committee can move to Chicago the internal situation must be stabilized. Your argument in discussion with me was exactly the opposite: In order that the internal situation be stabilized, the National Committee must move to Chicago. The argument that the Shachtman group took a majority in the city executive committee of New York holds no water in my opinion. The elections were the most democratic imaginable and the results simply expressed the opinions and leanings of the great majority of the New York membership (circa two to one). No factional abuse is being made of this majority to even the slightest degree. I have been insisting upon all comrades

being active in the general work, and thus far not a single one of the three branch meetings has taken place on a factional basis. In the city committee itself, where I was unanimously elected city organizer (with the vote of the two supporters of the Cannon group also), we elected comrade Kitt (Cannon group) to the second most important post in the committee—industrial organizer—and comrade Clarke (also Cannon group) to the post of secretary of the committee. (Comrade Weber is in charge of the agitprop work.)

Because I am concerned over the possible results of this new move by the Cannon group in the National Committee, I am writing to you in the hope that you will find it advisable to express your opinion. Perhaps you will write to the National Committee officially or semiofficially, or else you may think it better to address a private letter to comrade Swabeck, who is now unfortunately supporting the proposal of comrade Cannon.

A convention now and no move to Chicago would, I feel, be in contradiction with the discussions we had in Turkey toward the end of my visit. I continue to doubt the advisability or profitability of the new proposal. However, if it should be decided to hold a convention, I do not think we shall stand in the way, because we have no “private interest” to defend. I look forward anxiously to a communication from you expressing your opinion.



The News Is Disquieting

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Arne Swabeck⁵⁴³

20 November 1933

I have received no news from you for a long time. The most recent letters from America were rather disquieting. It seems—if I understand the situation correctly—that your group is delaying the transfer of the leadership to Chicago, but on the other hand, would like to hold the national conference as soon as possible in order to “decide” the leadership question. If that is the case, it means a complete reversal of your group’s previous position. All of us here diligently and successfully supported your previous standpoint: no

immediate national conference, transfer of the leadership to Chicago, energetic mass work, and overcoming the internal differences by this road. The International Secretariat committed itself to this road. It is certainly understandable that material obstacles hinder the transfer of the leadership (although you should have foreseen those obstacles earlier), but it is much more difficult to understand why you want to overcome the differences not by broadening your political activities but by immediately convening a national conference. Perhaps because you now hope to get 51 percent for your own side?

I am writing to you in an *entirely private and personal capacity* only to voice my reservations and concerns; I now await your reply with great impatience.



A Turn for the Worse

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman⁵⁴⁴

25 November 1933

I am at fault before you, but deserve leniency. Sara has probably written you that I was ill. For a month I was on complete rest and so forth. And even now I find very difficult the political questions you have put to me. When you and Swabeck were in Europe and at Prinkipo, there was still the possibility through detailed discussions to form an opinion about the situation in the League and a way out of it. Since then a number of months have gone by. At first it seemed that the situation had turned sharply for the better. But now, as I see from your letter, a worsening has set in again. What are the reasons?

The plan that half a year ago won the sympathy of the European comrades—myself included—consisted of the following: The conference is postponed, as in itself it cannot provide a way out of the situation; all forces are directed into mass work under the banner of the new orientation; the central committee is transferred to Chicago, to a fresh atmosphere, in order to free up its hands as well as those of the New York organization. The initiative for this

plan came in the main from the majority of the central committee. After the minority agreed to support this plan, it seemed to me that the chances for success greatly improved. Now you write that the majority of the central committee is postponing the transfer to Chicago, but insists on hastening the conference. This plan is directly counterposed to the previous one. What brought about the change? In order to form an opinion, it is necessary to know the circumstances better. I asked comrade Swabek in a private manner to inform me about the situation. This present letter is also of a completely private and preliminary character. Of course, I am extremely disappointed with this unfavorable turn of events, but for the time being I am forced to refrain from any judgment on the essence of the question.

Until today nothing further has been heard of the *New International*. How is one to understand it? Just another financial crisis? As I had occasion to convince myself, our American friends are not very strong on bookkeeping: They start with a bang and then accidentally discover that their cash box is empty. Or are there perhaps some other reasons for it?⁵⁴⁵



Reasons to Postpone the Move

Letter by Arne Swabek to Leon Trotsky⁵⁴⁶

20 December 1933

It is with sincere regrets that I acknowledge my failure to communicate with you. My recent tour was quite extensive and I was entirely taken up with the activities and problems of the organizations in the various cities. But I also had the opportunity of getting a very good picture of the conditions within the League. For the future I shall promise to remedy my failure of the past and communicate more regularly.

The League is in a process of real growth and a serious, although small, beginning toward entry into mass activities. To us here—and I mean all of us, regardless of groupings (or former groupings)—the picture it presents looks promising. The report

which I am enclosing herewith, I believe, will convey an idea of its growth and prospects.⁵⁴⁷

It is my opinion that when comrades write to you from America and portray the true situation, they could not convey disturbing thoughts. I feel quite confident in saying that we have made steady though slow progress toward resolving our internal difficulties, and essentially by the means of enlarging the scope of our political activities. But this progress has not been without its disturbing features to us here.

We adopted what we call our Action Program simultaneously with, and in harmony with, our change of orientation toward a new international and new parties. Essentially it contained the ideas previously advanced, that is, of a definite entry into a mass agitation stage, the popularization of the *Militant*, the establishment of a theoretical organ, the strengthening of the League by building peripheral organizations, and the transfer of the national headquarters to Chicago. It contained these ideas with the addition, as we all considered proper, of the greatest emphasis on measures toward mass activities. It is true that this was the program of our group in the main advanced by comrade Cannon prior to my return from Europe. These general ideas were conceived to be simultaneously a means toward overcoming our internal difficulties, and the support they received from yourself and from the International Secretariat contributed very much toward making them unanimous here. But we were well aware that the steps contemplated could not be carried into life very speedily, particularly not those depending directly upon material means. We did not think it possible at all to take as the first step the one of transfer of headquarters to Chicago. I personally was perhaps the most outspoken in this respect, and I stated several times that, in my opinion, it would require several months before we could settle pressing obligations in New York and have sufficient material means to make the transfer and assure the publication of the *Militant* in Chicago, not having our own print shop there. Comrade Shachtman, who has maintained his position of not favoring the transfer but affirming his support of it, has expressed as his opinion that the transfer should have taken place already. But it is not raised as an issue and could not very well be, inasmuch as the material means have not yet been available.

To us today, as well as previously, the question of time of the

transfer appears purely as a practical proposition. The date will be more delayed than we originally expected because our financial means suffered a relapse which we first have to overcome. But in this whole question certain tendencies and features also emerged which to us appeared very disturbing in character and caused us considerable uneasiness in regard to the prospect of solving our internal difficulties. Upon the return of comrade Shachtman and myself I made the proposal that he, comrade Cannon, and myself should pledge ourselves to remain full-time functionaries for the League. Comrade Shachtman insisted that his economic condition would not permit it for some time to come. We all know by experience the economic hardship which such positions impose; nevertheless, we agreed only reluctantly, because of political reasons, to comrade Shachtman's release. Later comrade Shachtman proposed himself as the full-time organizer for the city of New York. We welcomed that proposal, and it was carried out with the recommendation of the National Committee. Next comrade Shachtman proposed that when transferring to the headquarters the theoretical organ, when established, should be published for a time in New York and that he should remain there because of the leadership needed in New York. Given such reasons, the proposal did not seem to us to imply a temporary stay; nevertheless, we agreed reluctantly that when the transfer would be made, he could remain for a short time in New York (a few months). It would be difficult at this stage of development and growth to conceive of one leading comrade remaining away from the center of leadership for any lengthy period of time, unless it is a matter of being unavoidably absent on some special mission. Further in this chain of events, we came to the elections of a new local executive committee for New York, now made up of three branches instead of one. We have always, since the adoption of our unity resolution, pursued the method of working by way of agreement in organizational questions. We could not in this case reach an agreement as to composition of the local executive. We did not consider this so serious, but far more serious appeared, to us, the many statements made in the discussion by more outspoken comrades: "You take the national office, we keep the New York organization," meaning "you" the majority, "we" the minority. We looked upon all these "incidents" as disturbing symptoms, but endeavored to give them as little attention as possible and resolved rather to center all efforts

on the expansion of political activities. In respect to this latter, we have met with no disagreements but have been able to arrive at mutual collaboration by all comrades concerned. Because of this, we try to avoid ascribing any direct political significance to the disturbing symptoms. Yet they do arise still today, despite the progress we have made toward internal stability.

We are now making preparations for our national convention, tentatively scheduled for the end of March. It does not now present the question of bringing the question of leadership to a "decision" in the sense that it would have at an earlier date, that is, in a purely factional sense. We opposed a speedy convention at that time, knowing that such a "decision" would be no solution whatever. Upon our return from Europe, we had a tacit agreement to hold this convention question in abeyance until such time as progress had been made toward moderating and changing the internal situation. Later, when we felt that such progress had been accomplished, we suggested a convention at the end of the year. Comrade Shachtman replied that he desired a little time to consider the suggestion. We postponed the question altogether until my return from the national tour. The proposal now made for the convention at the end of March is my proposal. It meets with the approval of the membership as a whole; in fact, it is approved eagerly. Comrade Glotzer supports it. Comrade Shachtman states that he has no opposition but gives no reasons for saying neither yes nor no. Is this because comrade Shachtman considers the time not now opportune for raising the issue of deciding the leadership in the old sense of the term, that is, in a factional sense, and that he will rather stall for time? That I am not able to answer. It is such symptoms recurring from time to time which have made me hesitant about expressing an opinion and, as a matter of fact, hesitant about writing until the road ahead would seem clear.

That there is not now a situation in the League favorable to a return to the old internal basis is definite. I mean this in the sense of speaking about the broad membership. Within the branches in the country outside of New York, none of the comrades could be enlisted for a reversal to the old situation. In New York none of the newer members would be favorable. That means an advantage and distinct progress. Even in New York, among the membership section formerly involved in the internal struggle, the atmosphere is a changed one. The division of the old branch has done its part

toward the present condition where the National Committee is no longer as it was before tied up in the specific New York problems—mostly internal—but has the possibility of functioning more truly as a *National* Committee. But above all, the decisive feature of our present situation is the fact that the great objective tasks which we now face press for a serious discussion, convention consideration, and solution. These factors are the best guarantee against a return to the old situation and against a decision on the old basis. They are the best guarantee for a serious, objective convention. Still, of course, it is our view that the convention date is also a question of mutual agreement and need not be settled by a majority vote.

When considered seriously, there could be no reasons advanced from our side on a specifically internal basis for the holding of the convention at this time. Were there such reasons, it would be far simpler and more “convenient” to leave matters as they are now. But entirely new problems are before us. New elements are coming into the League in increasing numbers; the present negotiations with the small groups orienting for a new party, when resulting in agreement, will give us another face and serve to further change our position. It calls for a greater consolidation and stability of the League, as well as a greater clarification and precision of our direction and tasks.

In addition to this, I want to touch upon what may soon prove to be our most important problem. You will notice from my report the action taken by the CPLA (Musteites) toward constituting themselves a political party, a “revolutionary” party—the American Workers Party—to be finally launched by July 4 and to be launched by them alone. This development requires serious but not too long-drawn-out consideration on our part. In the first instance the taking of this action was accelerated by our declaration for a new party. There is room in America today—considerable room—for a centrist party. The Musteites have very few trained politicians; nevertheless, they have a quite well thought-out pattern for a “revolutionary” party which fits the situation admirably in the sense that it will have a broad appeal. The pattern is to be “genuine” American—to build a party in America now, and bother with the troublesome international questions later. The discredit of the internationals will serve temporarily in their favor. Should the Lovestoneites join in, which is not entirely out of the ques-

tion, they will have more well-trained politicians and organizers. Meanwhile, the official Party is declining and decomposing, while we are growing.

Will this Musteite decision change our position or, rather, our tempo of development? We are just beginning to consider this. We know that the groups which we can count upon for a new party today and for some time to come are definitely defined and only small splinters. The League is pretty much the direct basis for the new party. Can we remain very long in transition? Can we not better, more directly, and more speedily assemble the forces available by stepping forward openly, lay the party foundation, and constitute the new party without much delay—possibly even before the American Workers Party finally emerges? What would be the adverse factors involved in such a procedure? These are the questions we will have to answer, and answer soon. Personally I lean strongly toward an affirmative answer.

It seems to me that there are many important reasons for a League convention now. It will have the advantage of occurring right in the midst of a serious extension of our political activities.

This letter is far too long, but I felt it was necessary to make an attempt to explain in detail. I hope you will excuse.



As Opportunities Grow, Internal Struggle Will Diminish

Letter by Leon Trotsky to Max Shachtman⁵¹⁸

30 January 1934

We received here the photo of the work by Diego Rivera and, as a result, our entire house livened up with great happiness. Many thanks from the entire household. The photo now stands on my fireplace and, while sitting at my work, from time to time I look at it with pleasure. Does Rivera plan to visit Europe in the spring or summer? I would be very glad to get acquainted with him. Pass along my warmest greetings.

Sara will be leaving us tomorrow. It was truly a great idea that you came up with a year ago to have her come to Prinkipo. I remain very grateful to you for this.

I received a detailed letter from comrade Swabeck with an enclosed report on his trip. I am of the impression that comrade Swabeck is utterly sincere in his desire to help liquidate the old struggle. In general he views very optimistically the opportunities that are opening before the League and even the situation in the League itself. He figures that with the influx of new members and the growth of the League's successes, the danger of an exacerbation of the internal struggle diminishes. I can only be gladdened by this.

I want to pose a question to you about Weisbord. If he were to firmly commit himself to not attack the League and so forth, would you consider it possible to merge the two theoretical organs, bringing Weisbord into the editorial board as a minority, and to provide him with a certain freedom of "discussion"? I am not putting forward this proposal; I merely wish to inform myself of your views.⁵⁴⁹

If such a plan were feasible, the advantages would be obvious not only for the relationship with Weisbord, but for relations with other groups and individuals who would be convinced that the League knows how to gather people and provide them with freedom of discussion, without, however, overstepping its principles.

Notes

See “Archival Sources: Key to the Abbreviations” in the References section for the full information on archival collections cited here. See “Published Works,” also in the References section, for the full publication information for works cited.

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1. Cannon, *History*, 80-100.
2. “Comité international provisoire de l’Opposition Communiste de gauche” [Provisional International Committee of the Left Communist Opposition], 10 June 1929, SWP International Records, Box 1, F 1. In a 1980 lecture on the early ILO, George Breitman reported that representatives of the French, Chinese, Austrian, and Czech Oppositions, as well as Trotsky for the Russian Opposition, attended the May–June meetings that formed the ILO. See typescript 12, B Papers, Box 20, F 7.
3. Trotsky’s writings from this fight were collected and published as *In Defense of Marxism*; Cannon’s as *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*. See also International Communist League, “Bankruptcy of ‘New Class’ Theories” (1999).
4. Cannon to Theodore Draper, 31 January 1958, C Papers, Box 7, File of Cannon-Draper Correspondence for 1958. Shachtman lamented the 1919 split in “American Communism: A Re-Examination of the Past” (1957).
5. Reba Hansen to Joe Hansen, 4 December 1939, H Papers, Box 19, F 3.
6. Cannon to Charles Cornell, 4 April 1940, T Papers, 6206.
7. Cannon, *History*, 95.
8. Shachtman, *Reminiscences*, 210-211.
9. Swabeck, interviews by PRL, 6 and 18 November 1974, 1 March 1975, 15 May 1976; Stamm and Cowl, interview by PRL, 7 November 1976; Oehler, interview by PRL, 7 June 1977; Lewit, interview by PRL, 21 April 1993; tape recordings, PRL. Stamm, Oehler, and Swabeck were stalwarts of the Cannon faction; Cowl and Lewit supported Shachtman.
10. Glotzer, interview by PRL, 19–20 April 1993, 2 April 1997, 21 November 1998, tape recordings, PRL. The program for the memorial meeting also named Valcourt as chairman of the Social Democrats of Greater New York.

11. Myers, *Prophet's Army*, 55-56. Myers' works are riddled with factual inaccuracies; see "American Trotskyists: The First Years," where Myers actually wrote that "Shachtman and Cannon got on amicably enough" in the CLA.

12. Breitman can't be held accountable for the book, since it was published after his death. His useful 1980 lecture on the first Cannon-Shachtman fight, presented to the Socialist Workers Party's annual gathering at Oberlin College, is in B Papers, Series II, Box 20, F 6.

13. Drucker, *Shachtman*, 56-58.

14. The Constitution of the CLA established the NC as the leading body of the organization between conferences, and from 1929-32 the New York NC members functioned as the equivalent of a political bureau, acting in the name of the NC as a whole between plenums of the full committee. In late 1932 a formal Political Committee was established by poll of the full NC. But throughout the almost six years of the CLA's existence, its members used several names to refer to their leading bodies. The National Committee was often called the National Executive Committee, and the New York resident body was variously referred to as the NC, the NEC, or Resident Committee. It was almost never called the Political Committee, even in 1933-34. To avoid confusion, we have standardized all references to the National Committee and refer throughout the text to the New York resident body as the "resident committee."

15. Shachtman's lengthy 1936 polemic gets not one mention in Drucker's *Shachtman*. In 2000 "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?" was reprinted, with a substantive introduction, by the Prometheus Research Library.

16. See Shachtman, et al., "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism" (1939); Glotzer (Gates), "Cannon as Historian" (1945); Shachtman, "25 Years of American Trotskyism, Part I" (1954) (Part II was never published); Wohlforth, "Struggle for Marxism in the United States, Part III" (1965); Richardson, review of *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* (1992).

17. Cannon, "A Great Step Forward," *Militant*, 15 March 1931.

18. Cannon, "Draft on the Internal Struggle," July 1932, *Communist League of America*, 147.

19. Cannon, interview by Harry Ring, 13 February 1974, typescript, 16.

20. Cannon, "The Problem of Party Leadership," 1 November 1943, *Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, 374.

21. Shachtman, "Marxist Politics or Unprincipled Combinationism?"; Hansen, *The Abern Clique*.

22. Trotsky's Critique is better known today under its published title, *The Third International After Lenin*. Cannon read only the first and third parts in Moscow. The second part, "Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch," was not distributed to the commission.
23. International Communist League, "Trotsky and the Left Opposition" (2001), treats in detail the struggle in the Russian party in the 1920s.
24. Cannon, introduction to "Draft Program" by Trotsky, vi. This pamphlet included only the two sections of the Critique distributed to the Program Commission. Unfortunately, Pathfinder's collection of Cannon's 1928-31 writings, *Left Opposition*, omits this introduction.
25. PRL, introduction to *Early Years of American Communism*, by Cannon; Cannon, *First Ten Years*.
26. Edwards and Carlson were alternates on the CLA National Committee; Carlson was soon suspended for indiscipline and left the League.
27. Legien, "Belgian Trotskyists," 16-17.
28. Fischer and Maslow withdrew from the Leninbund within a few months of its founding. In exile in Paris after Hitler's ascension to power, they affiliated with the Trotskyists from 1934 to 1937.
29. Trotsky repeatedly defended Chen against ill-founded attacks by younger members of the Chinese section; see Trotsky, "Two Letters to China," 22 August and 1 September 1930, *On China*, 438-442. But cliquist attacks on Chen continued in the section; see Niel Shih (Liu Jen Ching), "Five Years of the Left Opposition in China: An Attempt to Explain its Failure to Make Progress," A Papers, Section IV, Box D.
30. For the fight against Pablo, see International Communist League, "Genesis of Pabloism" (Fall 1972). Cannon retired as national secretary of the SWP in 1953. Though he retained the title of national chairman until his death, he was kicked upstairs to "emeritus" status in 1965. For the last decade of his life there was significant estrangement between Cannon and the Farrell Dobbs/Tom Kerry leadership, in the end reformist, in New York. In 1964 Cannon reportedly gave a speech at a West Coast educational meeting against the party's accommodation to black nationalism; the up-and-coming Jack Barnes, who subsequently led the party down the road to quirky reformist secthood, threatened to expel Cannon; see Robertson, speech at "James P. Cannon Memorial Meeting, 27 August 1974." The Canadian academic Bryan Palmer, researching a biography of Cannon, has uncovered evidence that Rose Karsner was infuriated by Cannon's removal to emeritus status in 1965. "Don't Strangle the Party," a collection of several of Cannon's letters from 1966-67 that was edited by George Breitman, gives evidence of Cannon's dissatisfaction with the increasingly bureaucratic practices of the SWP.

31. Andy Durgan's "Spanish Trotskyists" (1991-92), an apology for Nin's break with Trotsky and orientation to Maurín's Workers and Peasants Bloc, covers the early history of the Spanish Opposition.

32. Benton, *Chen Duxiu's Last Articles*.

33. For "The Platform of the [United] Opposition," see Trotsky, *Challenge 1926-27*, 301-394; for Trotsky's "Letter," see *Stalin School of Falsification*, 1-88.

Eastman had earlier published *Since Lenin Died*, an account of the Bolshevik inner-party struggles from 1923-24. Christian Rakovsky read the book in manuscript. The book reported the existence of Lenin's Testament, but printed only excerpts from this and Opposition documents. The triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin forced Trotsky to deny its authenticity in a statement that appeared in English-language *Inprecorr* on 3 September 1925 and later in the American *Sunday Worker*. See "Letter on Eastman's Book," *Challenge 1923-25*, 310-315; see also Deutscher, *Prophet Unarmed*, 201-202.

34. Trotsky, "Alarm Signal!" 3 March 1933, *Writings 1932-33*, 112.

35. Trotsky, "The Bloc of the Right and the Left," 21 November 1930, *Writings 1930-31*, 57. In the new calendar established by the French Revolution, Thermidor was the month in which the revolutionary Jacobins were overthrown in 1794. Here Trotsky uses "Thermidorian" to refer to those favoring capitalist restoration in Russia. He later revised his use of the analogy; see "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," 1 February 1935, *Writings 1934-35*, 166-184.

36. Trotsky, "'Down with Stalin' Is Not Our Slogan," Autumn 1932, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 170-171. For a discussion of the Russian Left Opposition in this period, see Broué, *Trotsky*, 626-639, 700-712. See also Dauge, "Pierre Broué's *Trotsky*: Tailored for Perestroika" (1990-91). E.H. Carr's seminal 14-volume history of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet Union through 1929 provides the most complete account of the inner-party struggles.

37. Trotsky, "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition," 17 February 1931, *Writings 1930-31*, 147.

38. Trotsky, "Defense of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition," 7 September 1929, *Writings 1929*, 262-303.

39. Trotsky, "Greetings to the Weekly *Militant*," 19 October 1929, *ibid.*, 370.

40. Legien, "Belgian Trotskyists," 26-28. Legien writes that a majority of Van Overstraeten's group rejoined the Trotskyists in late 1933, after the ILO made the turn to constructing new parties and a new international.

41. Nin, letter to Trotsky, 3 December 1930, in Trotsky, *Spanish Revolution*, 371.

42. Trotsky, "Spanish Communism and the Catalan Federation," 8 July 1931, *ibid.*, 152.

43. For excerpts of the Trotsky-Nin correspondence, see *ibid.*, 369-400. The subsequent political evolution of the Spanish Opposition is outside the scope of this book, but it is important to note that they made a disaster out of the most promising proletarian revolutionary development in Europe since Germany in 1923, proving in blood the antirevolutionary course pursued by those who sought to merge the Left and Right Oppositions. Nin led the Spanish Trotskyists into a merger with the BOC in 1935, forming the centrist POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification). The POUM signed on to the Popular Front electoral alliance in early 1936 and refused to put itself at the head of embryonic organs of dual power during the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37. Instead Nin joined the popular-front government in Catalonia, politically disarming and demobilizing the masses before Franco's counterrevolutionary onslaught. The banning of the POUM and the murder of Nin in the wake of the Barcelona workers uprising in May 1937—in a campaign of terror spearheaded by the Stalinists—was the prelude to Franco's victory and the crushing defeat of the Spanish working class.

44. See Trotsky, "The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question," 4 January 1931, *Trade Unions*, 130-138. Trotsky believed that Ligue member Pierre Gourget was the author of the OU program. In his annotations to *Trotsky-Rosmer Correspondance* (p. 177), Broué attempts to blunt the thrust of Trotsky's criticisms by insisting that the OU program was actually written by teachers federation leader Maurice Dommanget. Whether or not Gourget wrote the program was immaterial to Trotsky's polemic against the Ligue's subordination of its work to this ongoing bloc with rightward-moving elements against the Stalinist CGTU leadership.

45. Gourget soon returned to the Ligue, but *Gauche communiste* continued.

46. Trotsky, "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition," 17 February 1931, *Writings 1930-31*, 148. Graef at the time claimed to lead an opposition within the Austrian Communist Party. He soon capitulated and rejoined the Stalinist faction.

47. Frankel, "Die Haltung des Genossen Landau in der österreichischen und deutschen Fragen: Gedrängte Darstellung an Hand von Dokumenten" [Comrade Landau's Role in the Austrian and German Questions: A Brief Account on the Basis of Documents], 6 January 1931, T Papers, 16850, 1 (translation by PRL).

48. Frank, Mill, Souza, "To All the National Sections of the Left Opposition, to All the Organizations of the German Left Opposition," 15 May 1931, G Papers, Box 10. The I.S. announced plans to send Frank and Souza to Berlin to participate in a plenary meeting of the German leadership and to create a commission to prepare for a German conference. Landau's refusal to participate was in effect a break with the ILO.

49. Trotsky, "On the State of the Left Opposition," 16 December 1932, *Writings 1932-33*, 33. Landau's bloody end in Spain, where he coordinated the activities of the POUM's foreign supporters and was kidnapped and murdered by the Stalinists in 1937, in no way invalidates Trotsky's sharp censure of his unprincipled approach to politics. Hans Schafranek downplays Landau's destructive role in the German Opposition in his English-language biographical summary, "Kurt Landau" (1991-92).

50. Casciola, "Nicola Di Bartolomeo" (1995).

51. Cannon, notes for "Report on Int[ernational] Situation of the Left Opposition," C Papers, Box 27, F 1. The archive dates the speech to 25 February 1932, but this is impossible since it mentions events that happened only later that year. It was probably given in February 1933.

52. "Comité international provisoire," see note 2, page 607.

53. Trotsky, "A Big Step Forward," April 1930, *Writings 1930*, 187. The conference was attended by representatives of the French, German, Belgian, Spanish, Czech, Hungarian, and U.S. Oppositions, as well as by a Paris-based Jewish Opposition group, publishers of the Yiddish journal *Klorkeit*. The Russian Opposition, Austrian, Mexican, Greek, Chinese, and Argentine groups were unable to send delegates.

54. Trotsky, "Circular Letter Number One," 21 June 1930, *ibid.*, 291; see also "Circular Letter Number Two," 29 June 1930, *ibid.*, 302.

55. Communist International, "Letter of Invitation to the Congress," 24 January 1919, *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos*, 6.

56. "Die Organisationsformen der internationalen Verbindung der Linksoption (Anträge einer Besprechung der unten gefertigten Genossen)" [The Organizational Forms of the International Association of the Left Opposition (Motions from a Discussion by the Undersigned Comrades)], 12 October 1930, S Papers, Box 4, F 2 (translation by PRL). The body that was established following this meeting was often called the "International Secretariat" as well as the "Administrative Secretariat." We will refer to it as the Administrative Secretariat to distinguish it from later bodies.

57. "An Alle Sektionen der Internationalen Opposition (Über die Einberufung einer Konferenz der europäischen Sektionen)" [To all Sections of the International Opposition (On the Convening of a Conference of

the European Sections)], 12 October 1930, SWP International Records, Box 1, F 2 (translation by PRL).

58. Copies of 1931 I.S. minutes are in the Cannon, Glotzer, Shachtman, and Trotsky Papers.

59. Trotsky, "Reply to the Jewish Group in the Communist League of France," 15 January 1932, *Writings 1932*, 26-30; "A Letter to the National Sections," 22 December 1931, *Writings 1930-31*, 365-373.

60. The first set of minutes of this Berlin-based Secretariat, dated 7 February 1932, is in the T Exile Papers, 16437. The core membership appears to have been Sedov, Witte, and Roman Well. Thus the GPU had intimate knowledge of its activities. Well's brother, Senin, often attended meetings.

Sedov had a visa to study mathematics in Berlin, and the ILO was concerned that public mention of his political activities could jeopardize his status. Landau accused the ILO of sending Sedov to Berlin as part of the fight against Landau's leadership of the German section. Frankel labeled Landau's accusation as "equivalent to denouncing him [Sedov] to the bourgeois police" (Frankel, confidential letter to the I.S., 7 April 1931, T Papers, 11288; translation by PRL).

61. See *Documents of the Fourth International*, 15-46, for the documents of the preconference.

62. International Communist League, "Trotsky in 1939-40: 'The IEC Does Not Exist'" (1989).

63. Vereeken, *GPU in the Trotskyist Movement*. Using the excuse of GPU infiltration, Vereeken seeks to discount every major political struggle waged by Trotsky within the ILO.

64. Trotsky, "Mill as a Stalinist Agent," October 1932; "The Lesson of Mill's Treachery," 13 October 1932, *Writings 1932*, 237-243.

65. Poretzky, *Our Own People*, 271-274. Zborowski confessed to his activities as a Stalinist infiltrator after being exposed in 1955. Jack Soble (A. Senin) was arrested in the U.S. in 1958 and convicted of espionage; his brother Robert Soblen (Roman Well) was convicted in 1961. Sylvia Franklin and Floyd Cleveland Miller testified at Jack Soble's trial.

66. Shachtman to Trotsky, 3 April 1930, T Papers, 5024. Shachtman reported that the Trotskyists expelled from the Leninbund refused at first to accept Landau on the leading committee. Shachtman wrote of Landau, "He is the only one, or one of two, that has any theoretical substance to speak of. His political line, in my opinion, is more nearly correct than that of any other comrade." Naville added a handwritten postscript saying he is "*tout à fait de l'avis de Shachtman*" [*in complete accord* with Shachtman's position] (emphasis in original).

67. Shachtman to Trotsky, 2 May 1930, T Papers, 5035. Rosmer also tried to justify the suppression of the manifesto in a 25 April 1930 letter to Trotsky. See Broué, *Trotsky-Rosmer Correspondance*, 138.

68. A.S., letter to CLA, 10 April 1931, G Papers, Box 1; minutes of the resident committee, 27 April 1931.

69. Swabeck to Trotsky and I.S., 13 June 1931, T Papers, 5449; minutes of the resident committee, 12 June 1931.

70. The publication of the Landau article in *Lutte des classes* is reported in minutes of the Administrative Secretariat, 16 July 1931.

71. Minutes of the Second National Convention of the Communist League of America (Opposition), 24-27 September 1931, PRL. The NC elected was Abern, Cannon, V. Dunne, Glotzer, Oehler, Shachtman, Skoglund, Spector, and Swabeck, with Oscar Coover, John Edwards, J. Silver, and B. Morgenstern as alternates.

72. Shachtman to Trotsky, 30 September and 20 October 1931, T Papers, 5049, 5051.

73. A series of translated quotations from letters written by Spanish OCE leaders, probably addressed to Russell Blackwell, can be found in C Papers, Box 20, F 1. Lacroix is quoted as writing on 14 April 1932: "Shachtman himself saw that we were right in the criticisms we made of Molinier and let Trotsky know about it....Since then an internal struggle has been set afoot against friend (amigo) Shachtman in which Trotsky also participates." Andrade is quoted as writing on 2 May 1932, "It is necessary to know this Molinier. He is an hijo de la mala madre [son of a bitch]....When Shachtman was in Europe he was against Molinier and disagreed with Trotsky and it is not particularly strange that the international intrigue to annihilate Shachtman in America has been set afoot."

74. Cannon, "Results of the Party Convention," 15 March 1929, *Left Opposition*, 135-141.

75. Cannon, "After Lovestone's Expulsion," 28 June 1929, *ibid.*, 185-186.

76. Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, 422.

77. Shachtman, *Reminiscences*, 200-206.

78. Cannon, *History*, 90.

79. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 91.

80. *Militant*, 15 December 1928; 1 and 15 February, 15 April 1929.

81. Morris Lewit and Sylvia Bleeker, both former Fosterites, joined the CLA in early 1930; in June a clot of some six New York YCLers came over, and the *Militant* reports individual CP recruits in July and Novem-

ber of the same year. In October 1931 a group of YCLers in Chicago was expelled in solidarity with the ILO; also in fall 1931 a group of Greek Trotskyists was expelled from the CP's New York Spartacus Club. In July 1932 the Chicago YCL provided another group of CLA recruits. Beginning in fall 1932 and running through summer 1933, the *Militant* carried frequent reports of CPers expelled for solidarity with the ILO position on Germany.

82. Some CLAers remained active in the ILD until late 1931, when a series of expulsions began in New York and Minneapolis (*Militant*, 26 September, 17 October 1931).

83. See "Cannon's Collaborators," Appendix 1 to *Early Years of American Communism*, by Cannon, 544-558, for an account of the Cannon faction's role in the "Save the Union" movement.

84. Facts and figures are from Bernstein, *Lean Years*, and Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*.

85. Cannon, *History*, 98-99; Swabeck, autobiographical manuscript, PRL, 348.

86. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 88.

87. Cannon, interview by Harry Ring, 13 February 1974, typescript, 21; Walta Karsner Ross, interview by PRL, 22 November 1993. Sam Gordon in Barnes, et al., *Cannon as We Knew Him*, says that Karsner was recovering from an illness when he first met her.

88. Cannon to Karsner, 2 September 1932, C Papers, Box 3, F 4; Karsner to Cannon, 9 May 1933, C Papers, Box 3, F 6; Cannon to Karsner, n.d., *ibid*.

89. Gordon in Barnes, et al., *op. cit.*, 57-58.

90. Lewit, interview; Stamm and Cowl, interview.

91. Shachtman to Glotzer, 11 September 1929; Abern to Glotzer, 20 September 1929, G Papers, Box 1.

92. Glotzer, correspondence with Abern and Shachtman, September-December 1929, G Papers, Box 1; Glotzer to Shachtman, 3 October 1929, S Papers, Box 6, F 22.

93. Swabeck to Cannon, 5 December 1929, C Papers, Box 1, File "Correspondence 1929 To and From JPC."

94. Cannon, miscellaneous notes, n.d., C Papers, Box 38, F 9. The folder contains disparate partial notes, including some evidently written for Cannon's unfinished reply to "Prospect and Retrospect."

95. Abern to Glotzer, 23 November 1929, G Papers, Box 1.

96. Cannon, miscellaneous notes, op. cit.
97. *Militant* nos. 1-5, November 1928-January 1929.
98. See PRL, introduction to *Early Years of American Communism*, by Cannon, 21-39.
99. Cannon, introduction to "Draft Program," by Trotsky, ix.
100. "Platform of the Communist Opposition," *Militant*, 15 February 1929; Swabeck, "The Labor Party and the Tasks of the Communists," *Militant*, 29 March 1929.
101. Cannon, "Differences on the Labor Party and Self-Determination," 20 April 1929, *Left Opposition*, 162-163; Glotzer, interview, 19 April 1993.
102. Trotsky, "Prospects of the Communist League of America," 26 March 1930, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 31-32.
103. Trotsky, "The Labor Party Question in the United States," 19 May 1932, *Writings 1932*, 95-97.
104. Shachtman, "Problem of the Labor Party" (1935).
105. Minutes of the resident committee, 24 September 1934. Cannon insisted, "According to present trends a national labor party organized by the trade unions is not out of the question."
106. "Discussions with Leon Trotsky on the Transitional Program," 21 March, 19 and 31 May 1938, Trotsky, *Transitional Program*, 113-136.
107. Breitman, "The Liberating Influence of the Transitional Program: The Labor Party Question," in *Trotskyism in the United States*, 109-126. Unfortunately, the SWP maintained the formulation "labor party" instead of using "workers party" to distinguish itself from British Labour Party reformism.
108. "The Negro in the Class Struggle," (November 1903), *Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*, (New York: Hermitage Press, Inc., 1948), 63-66.
109. Cannon, *History*, 229-243; PRL, introduction to *Early Years of American Communism*, by Cannon, 42-49.
110. Cannon, "Differences on the Labor Party and Self-Determination," op. cit., 162-163; Glotzer to Shachtman, 16 March 1929, S Papers, Box 6, F 22.
111. Trotsky to Cannon, n.d. [April 1929], T Papers, 7489.
112. Cannon to Trotsky, 29 July 1929, T Papers, 464.
113. K.M. Whitten. "Communism and the Negro Problem," *Militant*,

14 June 1930; H [Oehler?], "Self-Determination: The Problem of Mobilizing Negroes in the Class Struggle," *Militant*, 1 September 1930.

114. Swabeck, "Second National Conference Marks Step Forward," *Militant*, 10 October 1931.

115. Oehler, "The Negro and the Class Struggle," *Militant*, 30 April, 7 and 14 May 1932. See also Oehler, "A National Revolution in the South? Discussion Article on the Negro Question," *Militant*, 22 October 1932.

116. Cannon, "Negro Question and the Scottsboro Case," 22 April 1932, C Papers, Box 27, F 2.

117. For Swabeck's discussions with Trotsky, 28 February 1933, see Trotsky, *On Black Nationalism*, 20-31. Shachtman went to Prinkipo in spring 1933 with the intention of discussing his manuscript with Trotsky, but the ILO's turn toward building new parties internationally occupied Trotsky's time. In July the French government granted Trotsky a visa and Shachtman accompanied him there, leaving to return to the United States in August. In a letter written shortly after Shachtman's departure, Trotsky reported that he had not yet read the document, but that he planned to do so; see Trotsky to Shachtman, 22 August 1933, T Papers, 10311. The copy of Shachtman's manuscript in Trotsky's papers at Harvard has none of the waxy blue or red markings characteristically made by Trotsky when he read a document.

118. Shachtman, "Communism and the Negro," n.d., T Papers, 17244, 33, 58.

119. This irresolution continued until the SWP's 1939 convention, where a comprehensive thesis on black oppression was adopted. Written under the guidance of West Indian intellectual C.L.R. James, the resolution left open the possibility that black national consciousness and the demand for a "Negro state" might arise in the future, and pledged the SWP's support to the demand for "self-determination" in that case. This was a significant step backward from Shachtman's 1933 document.

120. Cannon, "We Have to Build Anew," 14 August 1929, *Left Opposition*, 204.

121. Shachtman, *Reminiscences*, 349-350.

122. Cannon, circular letter, "Dear Comrade and Friend," 8 March 1929, T Papers, 463.

123. No issues were published on 15 June, 15 July, and 1 September 1929.

124. Lewit, interview.

125. Swabeck to Cannon, 8 March 1930, C Papers, Box 3, F 3. See also Swabeck to Cannon, 8 April 1930, *ibid.*

126. Cannon, "Greetings to Leon Trotsky in Turkey," 1 April 1929, *Left Opposition*, 148.

127. Cannon, Notes for Speech on Crisis in the CPA, 1929, C Papers, Box 26, F 1.

128. Trotsky, "Greetings to the Weekly *Militant*," 19 October 1929, *Writings 1929*, 370.

129. Trotsky, "Prospects of the Communist League of America," 26 March 1930, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 31-32; Cannon, "Deeper Into the Party!," 26 July 1930, *Left Opposition*, 284-288.

130. Shachtman to Swabeck, to Dunne, to Spector, 26 April 1930, S Papers, Box 6, F 22. Trotsky promised royalties from Yiddish and English editions of *My Life*, *Permanent Revolution*, and *History of the Russian Revolution*.

131. Minutes of Plenum of National Committee, 24-27 May 1930; Cannon, "First Plenum of the CLA," 7 June 1930, *Left Opposition*, 256-261.

132. Cannon, "The 'Degeneration of the Old Guard'," 21 April 1932, *Communist League of America*, 85-86.

133. *Ibid.*, 88.

134. Some of Swabeck's internal circulars about the Expansion Program are in G Papers, Box 8. The *Militant* published regular progress reports.

135. Trotsky to Shachtman, 14 December 1931, T Papers, 10302. The money came from royalties from sales of his *History of the Russian Revolution*. Trotsky later made clear that the stabilization of the *Militant* should be a priority over the theoretical journal. See Trotsky, "The Weekly Comes First," 10 February 1932, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 106-107.

136. Minutes of the resident committee, 15 March 1932.

137. The *Militant* reduced the number of pages in November and skipped two issues in December 1932. *Unser Kampf*, edited by Morris Lewit, appeared 1 February 1932 to November 1933; *Young Spartacus* was published as a monthly from December 1931 until the Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party in 1936; *Communistes* began publication in December 1931 and continued at least until November 1932.

138. Minutes of the resident committee, 3 February 1932, record Swabeck in favor of the publication of *Unser Kampf*.

139. Minutes of the resident committee, 23 February 1931, record Cannon's proposal that the CLA undertake to publish Trotsky's collected

works; Swabeck moved that the League also undertake to produce a collection of Marx and Engels letters. The League's early Trotsky pamphlets were bound in a limited edition. In addition to Trotsky's Critique it included: "World Unemployment and the Soviet Five-Year Plan" (August 1930); "The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany" (September 1930); "Problems of the Development of the USSR" (April 1931); "The Revolution in Spain" (January 1931); "The Spanish Revolution and the Dangers Threatening It" (May 1931); "Communism and Syndicalism" (a series written from 1923 through 1930); and "Germany, the Key to the International Situation" (November 1931) (titles and dates of authorship per Pathfinder editions).

140. Lewit, interview.

141. See Cannon, "Our Policy and Present Tasks," 23 December 1930, *Left Opposition*, 296-312.

142. Unfortunately, few of Cannon's 1931 *Militant* columns are reprinted in Pathfinder's collection, *Left Opposition*. Cannon wrote on issues ranging from the ILO, to the League's advances under the Expansion Program, to trade-union events, to polemics against the Lovestoneites and the CP.

143. Swabeck, autobiographical manuscript, PRL, 349.

144. Cannon, "The Situation Is Becoming Impossible," 31 December 1931, *Left Opposition*, 404-407.

145. Cannon, "After the Founding of the Left Opposition," 10 May 1930, *ibid.*, 251.

146. Shachtman, untitled notes, 22 September 1930, T Papers, 17235. These were obviously written for the European ILO.

147. Shachtman, "25 Years of American Trotskyism" (1954), 17; Glotzer, "James P. Cannon as Historian" (1945). Glotzer asserts that the Cannon faction should have broken with the Comintern in 1925, when a cable from the ECCI overturned the American Party's elections and gave the minority Lovestone-Ruthenberg faction a majority on the Central Committee. But the numerical strength of the Cannon-Foster faction lay in the opportunist-leaning Finnish Federation. A break with the CI at that time, in the absence of a clear programmatic basis, could only have been a split *to the right*.

148. PRL, introduction to *Early Years of American Communism*, by Cannon, 68.

149. Cannon, "The Leading Cadre and Its Traditions," C Papers, Box 27, F 3.

150. Hass, "Trotskyism in Poland" (1995-96), indicates that the Polish

ILO section was a bloc between Left and Right Oppositions from its inception at the end of 1931. For the story of the Danish Trotskyists see Børge Trolle, "Danish Trotskyism" (1989). In a 10 May 1995 interview with the PRL, Trolle spoke of attempting to unify his organization with the Right Opposition even before World War II.

151. Shachtman to Trotsky, 2 May 1930, T Papers, 5035; Trotsky, "We Should Proceed as Democratically as Possible," 18 August 1930, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 47.

152. Cannon, "The New Unions and the Communists," 30 November 1929, *Left Opposition*, 220-224.

153. "On the Proposal for a New Farmer-Labor Party Fraud," *Militant*, 1 November 1930. The article opposed the project because it united Left and Right Oppositions and sought to create a two-class party.

154. O'Flaherty's alcoholism also played a part in his leaving the CLA; he eventually returned to Ireland. Abern kept up a gossipy anti-Cannon correspondence with him; see A Papers, Box 12, Fs 12-14.

155. See "We Must Endeavor to Collaborate With Naville and Rosmer," 17 December 1930, for excerpts from Shachtman's letter to Trotsky. Shachtman wrote that Weisbord's support was limited to four members, including Russell Blackwell.

156. Swabeck to I.S., 19 July 1931, T Papers, 15513.

157. Shachtman to I.S., 25 July 1931, T Papers, 15409 (translation from the French by PRL).

158. See Cannon, "Minority Maneuvers and Problems with Trotsky," October 1932; "For More Field Organizing," 5 November 1932; "The International Delegate Question," and "Financing the International Delegate," 20 December 1932; and "Our Delegate Will Be on the Boat," 1 January 1933, *Communist League of America*, 166-178; 184-188.

159. Cannon, "Draft on the Internal Struggle," *ibid.*, 139.

160. Cannon, "The Internal Crisis in the American League," n.d. [early 1933], C Papers, Box 27, F 3.

161. CLA Constitution (revised), *Militant*, 17 October 1931.

162. Swabeck, letter to all branches, 1 November 1932, PRL.

163. Rae Spiegel, Statement, attached to minutes of the resident committee, 7 June 1932; Swabeck to Boston Branch, n.d. [September/October 1932?], C Papers, Box 15, F 7; Konikow to NC, 21 September 1932, *ibid.*

164. Oehler to Cannon, 25 March 1933, C Papers, Box 3, F 5; Sifakis to Cannon, 16 January 1933, *ibid.*

165. Karsner to Swabeck, 24 May 1933, C Papers, Box 15, F 7; Karsner to Cannon, 1 June 1933 and Abern to NC, 1 June 1933, C Papers, Box 3, F 6; Sara Weber to Glotzer, 17 July 1934, G Papers, Box 3.
166. Sedov to Swabeck, 23 October 1931, T Papers, 13229 (translation from the French by PRL).
167. Swabeck to Cannon, 12 February 1933, B Papers, Box 9, F 4; Martin to CLA, 3 December 1934, S Papers, Box 6, F 3.
168. See Swabeck, letter to I.S. and Trotsky, 29 May 1933, T Papers, 15517, for his report on the trip to Germany.
169. Shachtman to Konikow, 6 January 1933, S Papers, Box 6, F 25.
170. Gould to Oehler, 26 October 1932, C Papers, Box 15, F 7.
171. Cannon, *Communist League of America*, 42-73.
172. *Ibid.*, 71-72.
173. Cannon, *History*, 94.
174. Shachtman, "25 Years of American Trotskyism" (1954), 18.
175. "The Opposition in Davenport" and "New Militant Forces Join the Ranks of the Left Opposition," *Militant*, 22 October 1932; "New Protest Against Stalin Bureaucrats" and "Des Moines, Iowa—A New Battleground for the Left Opposition," *Militant*, 26 November 1932.
176. Cannon, "For More Field Organizing," 5 November 1932, *Communist League of America*, 172.
177. Cannon, "Aftermath of the Needle Trades Convention," 21 and 28 June, 12 July 1930, *Left Opposition*, 268-283.
178. Hudson, *Progressive Mine Workers*; Bernstein, *Lean Years*, 358-390.
179. "Miners Protest the Expulsions," *Militant*, 1 February 1929. The letter was signed by Angelo and six other miners.
180. Glotzer, "Reminiscences of JPC," G Papers, Box 34, 29-30.
181. Cannon, "The Return of Gerry Allard," *Militant*, 5 September 1931.
182. "The Mining Situation and the Tasks of the Left Wing," *Militant*, 1 March 1930.
183. Trotsky, "Progressives in the United Mine Workers," 15 March 1930, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 30.
184. Shachtman to CLA National Committee, 16 March 1930, G Papers, Box 3.
185. Swabeck, "The Situation Among the Coal Miners," *Militant*, 12 April 1930.

186. Cannon, "Communists and Progressives," 7 March 1931, C Papers, Box 26, F 4.

187. "Draft of the Thesis on the Trade Union Question," *Militant*, 29 August 1931.

188. Trotsky, "The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the French Communist League on the Trade Union Question," 4 January 1931, *Trade Unions*, 34.

189. "Discussions with Trotsky," 12–15 June 1940, *Writings 1939–40*, 251–289. Trotsky noted a tendency of the Minneapolis Teamster paper, *Northwest Organizer*—edited by SWP supporters—to adapt to the so-called anti-Stalinist "progressives" in the AFL unions. Inadvertently confirming this, the SWP refused to give critical support to the CP's 1940 presidential campaign. Trotsky made this proposal to capitalize on the CP's temporary left turn during the Hitler-Stalin pact.

190. Minutes of the resident committee, 27 April 1931. The resident committee criticized the statement issued at the conference by CLA supporters Angelo and Allard for not being sufficiently critical of the Howat-Muste leadership. Cannon made up for the deficiency in his column, "The Miners Convention," *Militant*, 1 May 1931.

191. "Miners Form New Union," *Militant*, 10 September 1932.

192. Swabeck, "A Reply to Comrade Allard," *Militant*, 17 September 1932. A letter from Angelo in the same issue stressed the importance of fighting anti-Communism in the PMA. At the same time, George Clarke had to fight with CLA members in the coalfields who didn't want to publicly support the CP's presidential ticket; see minutes of the resident committee, 29 September 1932. Cannon evidently wrote to Allard with criticisms of the anti-Communism in the PMA's journal, *Progressive Miner*, in early 1933; Allard's 23 January 1933 reply, which attacked "you fellows in New York...isolating yourselves from the masses of workers," is in C Papers, Box 3, F 5. See also Oehler to Cannon, 7 March 1933, *ibid.*; Cannon, "Our Work in the PMA" and "On Collaboration with Allard," 10 April 1933; "Allard at the Turning Point," 20 April 1933; and "Red-Baiting in the Illinois Mine Fields," 29 April 1933, *Communist League of America*, 249–259.

193. Cannon, interview by Harry Ring, 8 March 1974, typescript, 16–17.

194. Cannon, notes for a speech on the PMA, C Papers, Box 27, F 6.

195. Shachtman to Angelo, 3 March 1933, S Papers, Box 6, F 25.

196. Shachtman to Angelo, 6 January 1933; Angelo to Shachtman, 23 January 1933, *ibid.*

197. Cannon, "Report and Proposals on Illinois Miners Situation," n.d. [early 1933], C Papers, Box 27, F 6.

198. Cannon, interview by Harry Ring, 8 March 1974, typescript, 18.
199. Communist International, "Guidelines," 27-32.
200. "Resolution," C Papers, Box 42, F 6. For more on this resolution, see Swabeck, "International Consultation Is Key," 12 May 1933.
201. See letters from Oehler to Cannon in C Papers, Box 6, F 3. In a letter dated 29 May 1933, Oehler reported that he had organized a CLA branch of four in Staunton, but added that the branch was underground because of the witchhunt and asked Cannon not to send any internal material there.
202. Alex Fraser to Oehler, 9 August 1933, C Papers, Box 15, F 7. Fraser reported that he was planning to return to his native Scotland after being beaten on the street by the local sheriff's brother-in-law.
203. Karsner to Cannon, 9 May 1933, C Papers, Box 3, F 6.
204. Cannon, "Internationalism and the SWP," 18 May 1953, *Speeches to the Party*, 84-86.
205. Glotzer to Trotsky, 15 November 1932, G Papers, Box 3.
206. Cannon, "On Relations with B.J. Field," 6 October 1932, *Communist League of America*, 163-165.
207. Cannon, "The Problem of Party Leadership," 1 November 1943, *Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, 362-363. Sam Gordon remembered that the Cannon faction met in New York during this time, read the letter addressed to Trotsky, and agreed to support Cannon if it came down to it. See his essay in Barnes, et al., *Cannon as We Knew Him*, 72.
208. Cannon, "Internationalism and the SWP," *Speeches to the Party*, 86-87. Soon after his return to the U.S., B.J. Field was readmitted to CLA membership, where he attempted to build his own "neutral" group in the CLA's factional struggle, until his second and final expulsion in early 1934. See Cannon, *History*, 126-135.
209. Cannon, *ibid.*, 183-184.
210. Shachtman, "25 Years of American Trotskyism" (1954).
211. Cannon, notes for speech on Germany, 10 March 1933, C Papers, Box 27, F 4.
212. Trotsky, "It Is Impossible to Remain in the Same 'International' with Stalin, Manuilsky, Lozovsky and Company," 20 July 1933; "For New Communist Parties and the New International," 27 July 1933, *Writings 1933-34*, 17-24, 26-27.
213. Casciola, "Pietro Tresso" (1995).

214. Trotsky, "The Declaration of Four," 26 August 1933, *Writings 1933-34*, 49-52.

215. Cannon, letters to all branches, 31 August 1933, PRL; 12 September 1933, T Papers, 13867; 16 September 1933, T Papers, 13866.

216. "The Lessons of the New York Hotel Strike," n.d. [March 1934], B.J. Field, A. Kaldis, J. Carr, D. Lovet, A. Russell, P. Myers, E. Field, SWP Records, Roll 32.

217. "Genesis of Pabloism," *Spartacist* no. 21 (Fall 1972); International Communist League, introduction to *Proletarian Military Policy*, Prometheus Research Series no. 2 (1989); Jan Norden, *Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International*, Prometheus Research Series no. 4 (1993).

218. Cannon, "Draft on the Internal Struggle," July 1932, *Communist League of America*, 138-142.

219. Shachtman et al., "War and Bureaucratic Conservatism."

220. Clarke, "Auto Crisis," 23.

221. Shachtman to Spector, 3 February 1930, S Papers, Box 6, F 22; Trotsky to Spector, 26 March 1930, T Papers, 10497.

222. Clarke, "Auto Crisis," 23.

223. Cannon, "The Anti-Cannon Bloc," 30 April 1932, *Communist League of America*, 103-104.

224. Glotzer, interview, 2 April 1997.

225. Cowl, "Report to the Minneapolis Branch on the Internal Controversy (Synopsis)," n.d. [mid-July 1932], S Papers, Box 6, F 18.

226. Gordon to Cannon, 29 December 1932, C Papers, Box 3, F 4.

227. Trotsky, "The Social Composition of the Party," 10 October 1937, *Writings 1936-37*, 490.

228. Cannon, *Letters from Prison*, 243.

229. *Ibid.*, 297.

230. T Papers, 10279, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

231. Shachtman to Trotsky, 3 April 1930, T Papers, 5034.

232. During Shachtman's visit to Prinkipo, Trotsky agreed to donate to the CLA the American royalties from the Yiddish edition of his autobiography, *My Life*. Shachtman was informed in Berlin that this would amount to about DM 100,000.

233. Abern to Trotsky, 30 March 1930, T Papers, 6. Abern reported on the CLA's contact with Opposition members in South Africa and China, and sent Trotsky a copy of the March issue of the American CP journal, *Communist*, which contained "The Rising Chinese Revolution and the Liquidation of Trotsky" by R. Doonping (C.T. Chi), a KMT supporter who had been active in the CP's All-American Anti-Imperialist League.

234. Trotsky's letter to Harry Winitsky, a member of the American Right Opposition led by Jay Lovestone, can be found in *Writings 1930*, 186.

235. T Papers, 10281, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

236. Shachtman to Trotsky, 30 June 1930, T Papers, 5036; Trotsky, "Circular Letter Number One," 21 June 1930, *Writings 1930*, 290-297.

237. Shachtman asked for Trotsky's opinion on an appeal by the Lovestone group for a "united front" with the CLA and the CP in the American trade unions.

238. Trotsky enjoyed fishing and was often accompanied by Charalambos, a local man; Shachtman sent Trotsky a cabled fishing line as a gift.

239. T Papers, 10284, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

240. Frankel to Shachtman, 17 November 1930, T Papers, 12365. Only the first page of the letter is in the archive. Frankel reported that Mahnruf could muster six members in Vienna and 20 in Graz, while the Frey group claimed 120 in Vienna and 20 in Graz. Both groups neglected work in the CP in favor of orienting to the far larger Social Democracy.

241. The 22 February 1930 *Militant* announced the formation of a Mexican Opposition group led by Russell Blackwell, former member of the Central Committee of the Mexican party's youth group, who used the party name Rosalio Negrete. Negrete was soon arrested and deported from Mexico. By July he was acting as the CLA's Spanish secretary in New York; see Abern to Trotsky, 7 July 1930, T Papers, 7. In October Negrete sent Trotsky an open letter addressed by himself and Alexander Golod to a politically undefined group of dissidents recently expelled from the Mexican party; see Negrete to Trotsky, 31 October 1930, T Papers, 3528.

242. Maurice Malkin, a former member of the Communist Party and leader of the Furriers Union, was imprisoned for strike activity. He adhered briefly to the CLA, but was expelled and rejoined the CP in 1931.

243. The *Weekly People* was published by the Socialist Labor Party.

244. T Papers, 10285, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

245. Trotsky, "Open Letter to the Prometeo Group," 22 April 1930, *Writings 1930*, 191-209.

246. Trotsky's 25 November 1930 letter to Naville gave the following characterization of Landau's preparations for the October conference of the German section:

"Feeding on Rosmer's indignation (with your encouragement by the way), he prepared in a rather peculiar way (the death of) the conference. He made use of organizational tricks instead of organizing it as the political expression of a revolutionary organization. Comrade Landau is mistaken if he thinks that the German Opposition was constituted through his skillful behind-the-scenes artifices. No, what is formed in such a way is only the Mahnruf, in other words not much more than nothing. If the German Opposition exists, it is a result of leaning on the international Opposition and support from the latter."

Of the crisis in France, Trotsky insisted:

"The question today is not the Molinier-Naville quarrel. The only important question is the trade-union question. The only crucial document is Gourget's theses. Comrade Naville, do you approve them or do you combat them? As for me, I rigorously combat them. I am sure you understand that I did not break with the centrists of Russia to take any responsibility for the confused centrist theses of comrade Gourget. Should I do that, the 7,500 members of the Opposition jailed or deported would be justified in branding me as a traitor."

Despite Trotsky's demand for an immediate reply, Naville answered on December 15, when he wrote, "I totally agree with you that it is *absolutely necessary* to rectify our trade-union policy." With no clear answer regarding his views on the Gourget theses, he reported that a public discussion on the trade-union question had begun in *La Vérité*. About his role in the international, Naville insisted, "The secretariat functions as it should. The fact that it was lagging behind in its functioning in early November is not due to any bad will on my part." Trotsky's 25 November 1930 letter and Naville's 15 December 1930 reply are published in Broué (ed.), *Trotsky-Naville-Van Heijenoort Correspondance*, 46-48, 49-50. Translation by PRL.

247. Grylewicz and Joko led the Trotskyists inside the Leninbund until they were expelled in February 1930. Their small group merged with the Wedding Opposition in April 1930 to form the United Opposition

of Germany, section of the ILO. In "Circular Letter Number One" (21 June 1930, *Writings 1930*, 293), Trotsky reported:

"Recently in the German section we have had sharp disputes that ended in the withdrawal of comrades Neumann, Joko, and Grylewicz from the leadership. This action, like a number of actions that preceded it, really has the character of a genuine literary and bureaucratic intrigue of the classical type. The comrades mentioned gave no hint of the principled reasons for their withdrawal."

248. T Papers, 5040.

249. The International Secretariat assigned Molinier and Mill to evaluate the Austrian groups claiming adherence to the ILO. See "Problems of the German Section," 31 January 1931, *Writings 1930-31*, 139-143.

250. G Papers, Box 3.

251. Frankel, "Die Haltung des Genossen Landau in der österreichischen und deutschen Fragen" [Comrade Landau's Role in the Austrian and German Questions], 6 January 1931, T Papers, 16850.

252. Frankel to Shachtman, 6 January 1931, S Papers, Box 2, F 49.

253. This pamphlet contained "Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch," the section of Trotsky's Critique missing from the manuscript Cannon brought back from Moscow in 1928.

254. Trotsky, "The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question," 4 January 1931, *Trade Unions*.

255. Trotsky is referring to the Left Opposition's criticisms of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee (1925-27). Tomsy was the head of the Russian trade unions; Purcell of the British Trades Union Congress.

256. In a 17 December 1930 letter, Shachtman had asked Trotsky to publicly explain his 1925 repudiation of Max Eastman's book, *Since Lenin Died*. In answer Trotsky probably forwarded his 11 September 1928 letter to Russian Left Oppositionist, N.I. Muralov; see Trotsky, "Max Eastman: A Friend of the October Revolution," *Challenge 1928-29*, 221-224.

257. Trotsky wrote, "The leading comrades in the United States inform us that in the American League certain comrades—to be sure, only individual ones (in the literal sense of the word)—speak for the bloc with the Lovestoneites in the name of 'mass work.' It is hard to imagine a more ridiculous, a more inept, a more sterile project than this. Do these people know at least a little of the history of the Bolshevik Party? Have they read the works of Lenin? Do they know the correspondence of Marx and Engels? Or has all the history of the revolutionary movement passed them by without leaving a trace? Fortunately, the overwhelming majority

of the American League has nothing in common with such ideas." See "The Mistakes of Rightist Elements of the Communist League on the Trade Union Question," op. cit., 37-38.

258. T Papers, 5041.

259. T Papers, 10290, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

260. Trotsky, "The Crisis in the German Left Opposition," 17 February 1931, *Writings 1930-31*, 147-170.

261. A fire destroyed Trotsky's rented villa on the Prinkipo Islands, forcing a move to the Constantinople suburb of Kadiköy, where the household remained for a year while the Prinkipo villa was repaired.

262. Shachtman had requested material for a projected book of Trotsky's writings on China, published in 1932 as *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*.

263. Trotsky was writing his three-volume *History of the Russian Revolution*.

264. T Papers, 15410.

265. T Papers, 5043.

266. T Papers, 10291, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Excerpts from another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1930-31*.

267. Trotsky agreed to turn over to the CLA the proceeds from sales of the serialization rights to the first volume of *History of the Russian Revolution* to foreign-language periodicals in the U.S. Shachtman sold these rights to the liberal Yiddish daily *The Day* and to Ludwig Lore's German-language *New Yorker Volkszeitung*. Trotsky was evidently concerned that his German publisher, Fischer, might object to the latter sale.

268. Trotsky's *History*, serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*, caused quite a stir in the bourgeois press, which Shachtman reported to Trotsky. Boni was Trotsky's American publisher.

269. T Papers, 10296, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

270. In May the CLA published Trotsky's "The Spanish Revolution and the Dangers Threatening It" under the title "The Spanish Revolution in Danger."

271. Gourget inspired the split of Gauche Communiste, but he quickly returned to the Ligue.

272. S Papers, Box 2, F 50.

273. T Papers, 5053.

274. Frankel to Shachtman, 20 August 1931, S Papers, Box 2, F 50.
275. Trotsky, "A Letter to the National Sections," *Writings 1930-31*, 365-373.
276. Trotsky, "Reply to the Jewish Group in the Communist League of France," 15 January 1932, *Writings 1932*, 26-30.
277. Shachtman is probably referring to a 19 November 1931 letter in which Trotsky objected to the announcement that *El Soviet* had suspended publication due to refusal to submit to censorship. This hid from the working class the truth about its precarious financial situation. In a 28 November 1931 letter Trotsky wrote: "The misunderstanding arising on the basis of the budget has become the object of an international intrigue. I shall not conceal from you that this incident creates an extremely unfavorable impression on me." Excerpts from both letters are published in Trotsky, *Spanish Revolution*, 396-397.
278. Béla Kun, Jenő Landler, John Pepper, and László Rudas were exiled members of the Hungarian Communist Party, notorious in the Comintern for their cliquist infighting. Bohumír Šmeral was the leader of the Czech Communist Party.
279. Albert Treint and Suzanne Girault led the Communist Party from 1924 to 1926; they were expelled in 1927 for supporting the Russian United Opposition.
280. The Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire (CGTU) resulted from a 1921 split in the main French trade-union federation, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT). Although the Comintern leadership opposed the schism, the CGTU was under the leadership of the French Communist Party from late 1922. During the Third Period, it was glorified as a "red" trade union and efforts to unify with the CGT were condemned. By late 1931, CGT leader Léon Jouhaux was making unity overtures to the CGTU. A pro-CGT right wing was active in the Communist-led federation.

From its inception the French Left Opposition called for an amalgamation conference of the CGT and CGTU, with full freedom of discussion and the right of various parties to organize fractions within the unions. However, there were evidently minor differences on how to apply this line in the concrete circumstances of late 1931.

281. T Papers, 10301, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College.
282. T Papers, 10303, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Excerpts from another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1930-31*.

283. Mill's articles called for the unity of the Left and Right Opposition in a Communist Party united against the "bureaucrats of the CI." See J. Obin, "What Is Happening in Spain?", *Militant*, 15 May 1931; "First of May in Madrid," *Militant*, 1 June 1931.

284. In a 16 December 1931 letter to Trotsky (T Papers, 5054), Shachtman proposed that he approach a bourgeois publisher about printing a biography of Stalin. To be included were "Stalin and the Red Army" by N. Markin (Leon Sedov) (later published in *Stalin School of Falsification*, 205-229), and three recent articles by Trotsky: "A Contribution to the Political Biography of Stalin" (*ibid.*, 179-198), "Stalin and the Chinese Revolution" (*On China*, 443-474), and "Stalin as a Theoretician" (*Writings 1930*, 308-334).

285. Trotsky donated \$1,000 of the royalties from sales of volume one of *History of the Russian Revolution* to push forward the CLA's proposed theoretical journal. Regarding the Yiddish rights to volume two of the *History*, Shachtman had mistakenly sold the serialization rights to both volumes in May 1931, a fact he sought to conceal from Trotsky for most of 1932. See Swabeck to Trotsky, 13 October 1932, T Papers, 5468.

286. T Papers, 8079, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1930-31*.

287. Arne Swabeck explained the Miller affair in a letter to Trotsky, "Shachtman Acted on His Own Authority" (22 January 1932).

288. T Papers, 10304, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

289. "To Help in Britain," 9 November 1931, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 98-99. Later a prominent Communist Party hack intellectual, Montagu made propaganda films for the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War and the British government during World War II. He authored a flattering 1942 portrait of Stalin and was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in 1959.

290. Shachtman to Trotsky, 16 December 1931, T Papers, 5054.

291. Trotsky, "Germany, the Key to the International Situation," 26 November 1931, *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, 115-131.

292. Trotsky to Montagu, 31 December 1931, T Papers, 9281.

293. T Papers, 8081, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1932*.

294. Swabeck to Trotsky, 11 February 1932, T Papers, 5459.

295. G Papers, Box 2. Copyright Stanford University.

296. This letter probably accompanied Abern's 19 January 1932 letter

to Trotsky, T Papers, 10. Abern reported that Charles Malamuth, a former correspondent for United Press who had spent a year in Russia and was sympathetic to the Left Opposition, was planning to write a book on Russia. He wanted to include a chapter on the Left Opposition and was requesting biographical information on leading members, including Rakovsky and Trotsky. Malamuth did not publish the book, but he subsequently offered to translate Trotsky's works into English. At the time of Trotsky's death, he was translating Trotsky's *Stalin*. Trotsky found his preliminary translating work problematic, and *Stalin*, published posthumously, is marred by Malamuth's social-democratic interpolations.

297. F.A. Ridley was at the time claiming adherence to the Left Opposition, but his views were far from the ILO. The *Militant* (31 October 1931) published his "A Communist Party—The Problem of Revolution in England," which represented the new British government as "the first stage of British fascism, which only requires time to become fully articulate." For Trotsky's polemics against Ridley, see "Tasks of the Left Opposition in Britain and India: Some Critical Remarks on Unsuccessful Theses," 7 November 1931, and "What Is a Revolutionary Situation?" 17 November 1931, *Writings 1930–31*, 337-343, 352-355.

298. T Papers, 5458.

299. Leon Sedov (Markin) had moved to Berlin and the International Secretariat had just been transferred there.

300. G Papers, Box 3.

301. In a letter to Swabeck supporting Abern's draft statement on the international question, Spector referred to an earlier letter of complaint about "the failure of the International Secretariat to function in either political or administrative regard" and insisted, "The reorganization of the I.S. is overdue." See Spector to Swabeck, 5 March 1932, G Papers, Box 3.

302. Shachtman sent Spector a copy of his January 23 letter to Trotsky, T Papers, 5056. He denied having received any letters from Trotsky while in Europe, or having any substantial differences with him. For quotations from this letter see the introduction to Shachtman, "A Bad Situation in the American League" (13 March 1932).

303. T Papers, 10305, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1932*.

304. The complete, unexpurgated text of Engels' 1895 introduction is published in *Marx, Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 27, 506-524. Alexander Trachtenberg detailed Eduard Bernstein's deletions in Engels' original manuscript in "The Marx-Engels Institute" (*Workers Monthly*, November

1925), where he also reported on the work being done by David Ryazanov and the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow to discover and preserve the literary heritage of Marx and Engels.

305. *Vorwärts* was the official paper of the German Social Democratic party (SPD); *Die Neue Zeit* was edited by Karl Kautsky.

306. Cannon, "Internal Problems of the CLA," 22 March 1932, *Communist League of America*, 42-73.

307. Cannon wrote an article objecting to the *Militant's* review of a new biography, *Lassalle*, by Arno Shirokauro; see "Public Apology for Article on Lassalle," 13 February 1932, *ibid.*, 31-32.

308. Rosa Luxemburg, "Speech to the Founding Convention of the German Communist Party," *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 400-427. This translation differs in detail from Shachtman's.

309. In their reply to this document, Cannon and Swabeck noted:

"If Cannon, with the full agreement of Swabeck, spoke at the national conference on the *concrete lessons* of the fight against Landau-Naville—after comrade Shachtman had overlooked this side of the question in his report—and did not mention comrade Shachtman's name, nor his half support of these elements, it was not because we lack the right to speak openly, or because we wish to fight him with 'insinuations' and 'hints.' It was only to warn him that we cannot agree that our League should skip over these international experiences without discussing what they really signified.

"These efforts to influence comrade Shachtman without appealing to the organization yielded absolutely no results. The breach, which we did not yet consider unbridgeable at the conference, became wider and *our League became further compromised in the international Opposition as a result of comrade Shachtman's conduct.*"

See Cannon, "Internal Problems of the CLA," *op. cit.*, 45-46.

310. T Papers, 5059.

311. T Papers, 5069. Shachtman reported that in the early 1920s the American CP had published a pamphlet by Radek that defended Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

312. At its March 15 meeting the CLA resident committee voted, "That the new book by comrade Trotsky on Germany be published as speedily as possible." Trotsky's "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat," dated 27 January 1932 and serialized in the *Militant* March-June 1932, was published in book form by Pioneer Publishers in September. See Trotsky, *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, 142-257.

313. Differently edited version in Cannon, *Communist League of America*.
314. Trotsky, "Why Mill Should Be Removed," 29 December 1931, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 102-104.
315. On 12 June 1931, after Trotsky had criticized the CLA for not taking a position, the resident committee discussed the fight against Landau and Naville. Shachtman was instructed to write a comprehensive resolution on the question, but Cannon's motion to publish this resolution in the *Militant* lost. Instead, the committee mandated the publication of "the conclusions" only. Shachtman did not write the resolution until just before the CLA's Second National Conference. Published in the *Militant* on 19 September 1931, it was subsequently adopted by the conference. The resolution declared publicly for the first time that the CLA "endorses the struggle conducted by our French section against the right-wing group of Gourget and against the ambiguous attitude of other members of the Ligue, such as Naville, who did not join in rejecting categorically the ideas and conduct of this group, and whose attitude instead comforted it, just as it comforted the Landau group in its destructive work in the ranks of the German Opposition."
316. G Papers, Box 8. Copyright Stanford University.
317. PRL.
318. T Papers, 15514.
319. Cannon, "Internal Problems of the CLA," op. cit.
320. At the CLA's Second National Conference in September 1931 Shachtman proposed to add Louis Basky and Morris Lewit to the National Committee as full members. Cannon strongly opposed the move, which failed.
321. Cannon, "Internal Problems of the CLA," op. cit.
322. Ibid.
323. PRL.
324. Sharp disputes in the resident committee beginning in late 1929 over the weekly *Militant* and Cannon's partial withdrawal from CLA activity led to the convening of a plenum in May 1930. See Glotzer, "The Real Basis of Our Differences," 5 April 1932.
325. PRL.
326. Cannon, "Lay the Whole Matter Before the Membership," 10 April 1932, *Communist League of America*, 80-82.
327. Cannon, "The 'Degeneration of the Old Guard'," 21 April 1932, *ibid.*, 83-91.

328. G Papers, Box 3. Copyright Stanford University. Glotzer reported to Trotsky January 24 on the recent disputes in the resident committee, reiterating that he disagreed with Shachtman on the situation in the French Ligue (G Papers, Box 3). On February 10 Trotsky replied that Glotzer's explanation had cleared up the "misunderstanding" over his views on the Paris Jewish Group (T Papers, 8258). He wrote to Glotzer again on February 26, noting, "Your letters are very valuable to me, because they really serve as a guide for me to the activity of the American League" (T Papers, 8259).

329. See "Minutes of Plenum of National Committee of Communist League of America, May 24-27, 1930," PRL. The minutes are sketchy and they record no co-optations to the National Committee.

330. In March 1932 a *New York Times* interview quoted Trotsky as believing that a labor party was inevitable in the United States. This caused considerable confusion in the CLA, whose Second National Conference in September 1931 adopted a position against raising the slogan for a labor party. See Trotsky, "The Labor Party Question in the United States," 19 May 1932, *Writings 1932*, 94-97.

331. T Papers, 16873.

332. Eight top leaders of the Canadian Communist Party (CPC) were arrested on 11 August 1931 and charged under Section 98 of the Criminal Code with being members and officers of an "unlawful organization" and part of a "seditious conspiracy." They were found guilty in November. This was part of a wave of repression against the Canadian workers movement, which included the breaking up of meetings, the banning of literature, and over 700 arrests. The *Militant* defended the CPC leaders and gave prominent coverage to the trial, which was attended by Maurice Spector. In a February 1932 decision that upheld most of the convictions, the Canadian Supreme Court virtually outlawed the CPC, which functioned as an underground organization until Tim Buck's release from prison in November 1934. Section 98 was not repealed until 1936.

333. Notorious as a sterile propaganda sect that engaged in little practical activity, the Proletarian Party (PP) originated as the Michigan Socialist Party and adhered briefly to the Communist movement before establishing a separate organization in 1920. In late 1931 the Proletarian Party Opposition left the PP, advocating "mass work"; its Cleveland and New York branches joined the Communist Party.

334. After the National Miners Union called a national strike on 1 January 1932, the ensuing repression all but destroyed the union in the American coalfields.

335. The Workmen's Circle was a Jewish labor organization that provided insurance benefits and organized Yiddish cultural and educational programs. Affiliated with the Socialist Party, it expelled supporters of the Communist Party in 1929.
336. A.C. Townley was a former member of the Socialist Party and founder of the Non-Partisan League, an agrarian populist organization that allied with Minnesota labor unions in 1918, creating the state Farmer-Labor Party.
337. S Papers, Box 6, F 23.
338. See Introduction, 37-44.
339. PRL.
340. PRL.
341. G Papers, Box 3. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.
342. S Papers, Box 6, F 23.
343. Cannon, "The Anti-Cannon Bloc," 30 April 1932, *Communist League of America*, 101-107.
344. Cannon, "The Fight Is Here," 7 May 1932, *ibid.*, 113-117.
345. Jack MacDonald, former national secretary of the Canadian Communist Party, had just adhered to the Left Opposition. His statement was published in the 28 May 1932 *Militant*.
346. T Papers, 8084, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.
347. Trotsky, "The Labor Party Question in the United States," 19 May 1932, *Writings 1932*, 94-97.
348. Trotsky, "Who Should Attend the International Conference?", 22 May 1932, *ibid.*, 99-103.
349. G Papers, Box 3. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.
350. Glotzer to Trotsky, 17 May 1932, G Papers, Box 3.
351. T Papers, 5061.
352. Trotsky, "Workers' Control of Production," 20 August 1931, and "Factory Councils and Workers' Control of Production," 12 September 1931, *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, 77-87; "Some Ideas on the Period and the Tasks of the Left Opposition," 28 July 1931, *Writings 1930-31*, 293-297.

353. PRL.

354. Cannon, "Internal Problems of the CLA," op. cit.

355. Cannon, "Draft on the Internal Struggle," July 1932, *ibid.*, 138-156.

356. Cannon, "After the Founding of the International Left Opposition," 10 May 1930, *Left Opposition*, 251-255.

357. Cannon, "Our Policy and Present Tasks," 23 December 1930, *ibid.*, 296-312.

358. Bittelman's view that "American capitalism is about to reach the apex of growth," its accumulating contradictions "leading to the downfall of American imperialism" was incorporated into "The Right Danger in the American Party," a document jointly submitted by the Cannon and Foster groups to the American Commission at the Sixth Comintern Congress in July 1928. It was serialized in the *Militant* from November 1928 to January 1929.

359. "Thesis for the Pre-Conference Discussion," *Militant*, 25 July 1931.

360. Cannon, "American Syndicalism and Problems of Communism," 15 February 1931, *Left Opposition*, 315-319.

361. Shachtman neglects to mention that this same resident committee meeting voted down a motion by Cannon that the *Militant* publish a comprehensive resolution on the international question as a signed statement of the National Committee.

362. In a letter to Oehler, Cannon accused the Shachtman faction of seeking Krehm's support; see "The Anti-Cannon Bloc," 30 April 1932, *Communist League of America*, 101-107.

363. Trotsky, "Who Should Attend the International Conference?," 22 May 1932, *Writings 1932*, 99-103.

364. Spector had been part of a delegation that went to the office of Ontario Premier Henry to protest the imprisonment of eight top leaders of the Canadian Communist Party.

365. Before the plenum the Toronto branch split into two on Spector's initiative, with one branch consisting of the Krehm group and the other of Spector and his supporters.

366. The final resident committee resolution declared, "We do not recognize the split as necessary and already accomplished, and are in no way willing at the present time to break off relations with the majority of the branch as it has existed up till now, or to recognize the existence of two branches." Noting the Krehm group also bore responsibility for the situation, the resolution described Krehm and his followers as "some-

what similar in composition and tendency to the Carter grouping in the New York branch.”

Regarding Spector’s participation in the delegation to protest the imprisonment of the eight CPC leaders, the resident committee noted that Spector “should have taken an opportunity to speak, if for no other reason than to distinguish the Left Opposition from the cringing, liberalistic program of the organizers of the delegation.” However, the committee noted that Krehm had “unduly magnified” the issue.

The committee recommended that the question of Spector’s participation in a mass organization be tabled until the atmosphere in the branch was less factional.

367. S Papers, Box 6, F 16. The original is unsigned.

368. We have found no carbon or mimeographed copies of the document in the available papers of other CLA leaders.

369. In 1924, with the backing of all factions, the American Communist Party came close to supporting Progressive Party presidential candidate Robert M. La Follette. On Trotsky’s insistence the Zinoviev leadership of the Comintern turned the Party back from support to this bourgeois candidate. After the elections, the Cannon-Foster group sought to reorient the Party away from the petty-bourgeois La Follette forces, advocating the dropping of the slogan for a farmer-labor party. See PRL, Introduction to *Early Years of American Communism*, by Cannon, 25-39.

370. PRL.

371. Cannon, “Results of the June Plenum,” July 1932, *Communist League of America*, 133-137.

372. Ibid.

373. S Papers, Box 6, F 23.

374. G Papers, Box 3.

375. T Papers, 10306, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

376. T Papers, 5062.

377. Cannon, “Internal Problems of the CLA,” op. cit.

378. Cannon quotes from the CLA’s original translations of Trotsky’s letters.

379. At the July 7 resident committee meeting, Shachtman, Abern, and Glotzer voted against Cannon’s motion on the New York branch, which was based on the plenum discussion.

380. T Papers, 15428.
381. T Papers, 8090, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1932*.
382. Cannon, "On Relations with B.J. Field," 6 October 1932, *Communist League of America*, 163-165. The letter was drafted by Cannon and signed by Swabeck as national secretary. On Field's expulsion see "Resolution on Fields," n.d., G Papers, Box 8; also Glotzer to Trotsky, 15 November 1932, G Papers, Box 3.
383. CLA National Committee, "League Replies to Weisbord Letter," *Militant*, 1 and 8 October 1932. Trotsky's original letter to the CLS, dated 22 May 1932, was published in the 10 September 1932 *Militant* (see Trotsky, *Writings 1932*, 104-109); the CLS's response, "Weisbord's Reply to Trotsky's Letter," was serialized in the *Militant* on 17 and 24 September 1932.
384. Minutes of the resident committee, 12 September 1932.
385. Cannon, "Minority Maneuvers and Problems with Trotsky," October 1932, *Communist League of America*, 166-170.
386. T Papers, 5065.
387. Weisbord's document was published in CLA *IB* no. 4.
388. "Negotiations with Weisbord Suspended," *Militant*, 31 December 1932.
389. Minutes of the resident committee, 24 October 1932.
390. Trotsky, "A Letter to Weisbord," 13 October 1932, *Writings 1932*, 236.
391. George Bye, a literary agent, handled Trotsky's 17 September 1932 article, "Fourteen Questions on Soviet Life and Morality," first published in *Liberty* magazine, 14 January 1933. See *Writings 1932*, 182-191.
392. Trotsky, *Europe and America* (1926).
393. G Papers, Box 3.
394. "Report to the Minneapolis Branch on the Internal Controversy (Synopsis)," n.d., S Papers, Box 6, F 18.
395. Cannon, "Minority Maneuvers and Problems with Trotsky," October 1932, op. cit.
396. In practice the NC members resident in New York continued to meet as the League's leading body. For clarity's sake we will continue to refer to this body as the resident committee.
397. Trotsky, "A Duty to Speak," 20 October 1932, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 164.

398. Trotsky, "Documents from Copenhagen," November 1932, *ibid.*, 175-180.

399. Cannon, "Our Delegate Will Be on the Boat," 1 January 1933, *Communist League of America*, 184-188.

400. For more on the Morgenstern marriage, see Abern and Shachtman, "Results of the Postplenum Discussion" (3 January 1933).

401. Zinoviev made the need to "Bolshevize" the Comintern's national parties the watchword of the Fifth Congress in 1924, but the campaign did not begin in earnest until the Fifth ECCI Plenum in March-April 1925. A key component of the bureaucratization of the Comintern, Bolshevization mandated the reorganization of all Communist parties, with small, easy-to-control factory cells and street nuclei replacing larger, territorial forms of organization. In the American Party the foreign-language federations were dissolved. Large membership meetings became rare in all parties, and when they were held they were rubber stamps for the expulsion of oppositionists rather than forums for open political debate.

402. In September southern Illinois miners on strike voted to found a new union, the Progressive Miners of America. At a September 15 meeting the resident committee adopted Cannon's proposal that the League raise \$100 to send Clarke, Angelo, and Allard on a tour of the Illinois mine fields in order to build League branches. Shachtman proposed sending Swabeck instead; later in the meeting he changed his candidate to Oehler.

403. G Papers, Box 3.

404. T Papers, 5470.

405. Trotsky, "Our Attitude to Weisbord," 27 May 1932, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*, 115-116.

406. S Papers, Box 6, F 24.

407. We can find no record that Shachtman issued a formal, written appeal against Swabeck's trip to Europe. Spector may be referring to the New York local's resolution on the subject, attached to the December 15 resident committee minutes along with a protest resolution from the Boston branch and a letter of opposition from Glotzer and Edwards in Chicago. At that meeting the committee rejected Shachtman's motion to reconsider sending Swabeck to Europe, voting instead to authorize the secretary to reply to the protests.

408. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation was a social-democratic federation of farm and labor organizations launched in Canada in August 1932. It evolved into the New Democratic Party.

409. PRL.

410. Cannon, "Results of Discussion and Voting on the Plenum Resolutions," 29 December 1932, *Communist League of America*, 179-183.

411. Cannon, "Our Delegate Will Be on the Boat," op. cit.

412. At the July 14 resident committee meeting Shachtman proposed to immediately invite CLA members to present their views in the *Internal Bulletin*, implying the opening of preconference discussion. He repeated the proposal on August 11, when his motion lost in favor of Cannon's that "In accordance with previous decision, we consider this question when the full committee convenes."

413. "Resolution by George Saul," 17 July 1932, G Papers, Box 7. Saul's lengthy resolution charged the entire National Committee with "being responsible for an unprincipled factional fight, the differences for which could have and should have been made known to the Second National Conference so that it could have acted upon a crisis within the NC before that crisis became a basis for a division in the League." Insisting that "along the present lines of Cannon vs. Shachtman there is little or no hope for the serious business of uniting the League, Bolshevizing it, preparing it with the tempo necessary for the historic tasks ahead," Saul proposed administrative measures to mitigate the struggle, including the division of the New York branch into three units.

414. At the July 14 resident committee meeting, Shachtman disputed the wording of Cannon's motion reappointing him *Militant* editor as recorded in the plenum minutes. Cannon insisted that the motion was correct, and Shachtman's motion to amend the minutes was rejected.

415. Cannon's circular reported that the co-optations lost by a vote of 59 to 65, with 10 abstentions. See Cannon, "Results of Discussion and Voting on the Plenum Resolutions," op. cit., 179.

416. The Progressive Miners of America (PMA) was founded at a convention in Gillespie, Illinois on 1 September 1932. A second convention was held in Gillespie on 3 October 1932. On September 29 Swabeck reported to the resident committee that the CLA comrades in the mines disagreed among themselves over raising the CLA's position in support of the Communist Party's presidential campaign at the convention. The resident committee voted unanimously to instruct the fraction to support the CP candidates. Basky and Swabeck voted against another Shachtman motion demanding that the fraction raise the issue on the convention floor.

417. When the NC broke off unity negotiations, the CLS organized a public meeting to discuss the issue. At a special November 8 session the resident committee adopted Cannon's motion characterizing this as "an

additional hostile maneuver against the League" and instructing New York CLA members not to attend. Shachtman and Abern opposed the prohibition; a few branch members, including Petras, attended the CLS forum despite the prohibition.

418. G Papers, Box 3.

419. Weber's "Japan: Its Rise from Feudalism to Capitalist Imperialism and the Development of the Proletariat" was serialized in the *Militant* from 24 September 1932 through 4 February 1933.

420. G Papers, Box 3.

421. "Opposition Youth at Chicago Conference," *Militant*, 7 January 1933.

422. During the 1919 steel strike, which he led as secretary of the AFL steel committee, Foster testified before a redbaiting congressional committee that he had personally bought war bonds and advocated that others do so. He was not a member of the Communist movement during World War I. Lovestone was granted immunity for testifying in the 1920 trial of Harry Winitsky, a Communist leader prosecuted for criminal anarchy. Claiming that the Party leadership had ordered him to testify, Lovestone was formally cleared of any wrongdoing by a Comintern investigation in 1925.

423. The conference was organized by the Stalinists in solidarity with a Comintern-supported antiwar conference held in Amsterdam in August 1932. The *Militant's* first article omitted any mention of the ILO's sharp declaration at Amsterdam, which condemned the Comintern's propaganda bloc with liberals and pacifists as an abandonment of an independent proletarian perspective (Trotsky, "Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam," 25 July 1932, *Writings 1932*, 148-155), and uncritically reported that SYC member Manny Geltman had accepted election to the steering committee established by the Chicago conference. A subsequent article ("Confusion Marks Stalinist Policy on Fight Against War: Student Conference Compromises Communism in Chicago Edition of Amsterdam; Yield on Principled Positions," *Militant*, 28 January 1933) corrected the political deficiencies of the first, but Geltman's participation on the steering committee remained a source of controversy. At the January 23 resident committee meeting, Shachtman and Abern abstained on Cannon's motion that Geltman demonstratively withdraw from the steering committee; it was only on February 6 that they acceded to his withdrawal.

424. PRL.

425. PRL.

426. PRL. Differently edited version in Cannon, *Communist League of America*.

427. PRL.

428. G Papers, Box 1. Copyright Stanford University.

429. Cannon, "The Left Opposition at Gillespie," 11 February 1933, *Communist League of America*, 200-205.

430. Benjamin Gitlow had just split from Lovestone's organization to found the Workers Communist League, which liquidated into the Socialist Party in 1934.

431. "Verblin" was Albert Goldman, at the time a Party member and sympathizer of the Left Opposition. In a 29 February 1933 letter to Martin Abern, Glotzer wrote that Goldman was "carrying on some agitation on the question of Germany, but appears to have been spotted by the Party" (G Papers, Box 1).

432. S Papers, Box 6, F 19.

433. Minutes of the resident committee, 29 September and 24 October 1932. We have been unable to locate minutes of the meeting in mid-September where the resolution was first discussed.

434. Minutes of the resident committee, 3 November 1932. Swabek reported that in the branch executive Oehler and Basky voted for the resolution, while Capelis, Sterling, Petras, and Weber opposed it.

435. Cannon, "External Advances, Internal Turmoil," 11 February 1933, *Communist League of America*, 209-212.

436. S Papers, Box 6, F 19.

437. Cannon's motion on the branch division was passed unanimously in the resident committee on 15 February 1933, with Shachtman abstaining only on the provision to create a city committee to coordinate the work of the three branches.

438. PRL.

439. Shachtman to Trotsky, 3 March 1933, T Papers, 5063.

440. Minutes of the resident committee, 18 March 1933. See Trotsky, "Germany and the USSR," 17 March 1933.

441. PRL.

442. Cannon, "Resolution on the Red Army and the German Revolution," 1 March 1933, *Communist League of America*, 214-220.

443. Trotsky, *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia* (1922).

444. PRL. Differently edited version in Cannon, *Communist League of America*.

445. The quote is from the motion Shachtman submitted to the 28 March 1933 resident committee meeting. See Shachtman, "Motion on CLA Delegate at Gillespie," 29 March 1933 (next document).

446. "Kincaid Miners Up for Trial," *Militant*, 25 March 1933. See also Glotzer to National Committee, 20 March 1933, G Papers, Box 1.

447. For more on the April Gillespie conference, see Cannon, "For a Realistic Policy at Gillespie," 30 March 1933; "Our Work in the PMA" and "On Collaboration with Allard," 10 April 1933, *Communist League of America*, 239-242, 249-252, 253-254. See also "2nd Gillespie Meeting: Conference Again Rejects New Federation Plan," *Militant*, 8 April 1933.

448. Swabek's report recapitulated the organizational disputes in the League since the June plenum. See "Report Submitted to Preliminary International Conference at Paris, 4 February 1933," SWP Records, Box 1, F 9. For a general account of the preconference, see *Documents of the Fourth International*, 13-43.

449. Swabek to Cannon, 15 February 1933, B Papers, Box 9, F 4.

450. "Protokoll der Besprechung am 27. Februar 1933: Über die Lage in der amerikanischen League" [Transcript of the Discussion on 27 February 1933, On the Situation in the American League], T Papers, nonexile section, 3510, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

451. The Communist Party attempted to frame the CLA for murder when two workers died after a melee at a Party street meeting in New York in August 1932. Earlier that day CP thugs attempted to break up a CLA meeting on the same street corner, but League supporters left the area in disciplined formation long before the Party's own meeting was attacked, presumably by neighborhood anti-Communist toughs. The League's campaign for a public hearing and trial to investigate the charges was endorsed by the Civil Liberties Union, the CPLA, and the IWW. The Party dropped the issue; see "Stalinists in Monstrous Frame-Up Against Left Opposition," *Militant*, 27 August 1932, and minutes of the resident committee, 1 September 1932.

452. Eastman had publicly denounced dialectical materialism, taking his first step on the road to anticommunism. See Trotsky, "Marxism and Eastman," 4 January 1933, *Writings 1932-33*, 68. The dispute was brought to the 1 December 1932 resident committee meeting, which passed Cannon's motion that the NC was "decidedly opposed" to the New York branch inviting Eastman to speak under its auspices. The secretary was

instructed to write a letter to that effect to the New York branch. Abern counterposed his own motion that the NC had no objection to Eastman speaking; Shachtman was not present at the meeting.

453. T Papers, 8002, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. The French-language original is missing the final page. We have translated from the French through section no. 10, point b; the remainder is taken from the English version in *CLA Internal Bulletin* no. 13 (29 April 1933). Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1932-33*.

454. T papers, 7982.

455. The small groups that united to form the Czech ILO section in spring 1932 split apart again by the time of the International Preconference. In addition, Alois Neurath led a split, centered in the German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia, from the Right Opposition, claiming solidarity with the ILO. The preconference voted, "The existence of a genuine *section* of the ILO in Czechoslovakia has become illusory. It would be an inexcusable mistake to tolerate a fiction. We must say what is: Under the given conditions the international Opposition finds it impossible to make a final selection among the existing Oppositionist elements in Czechoslovakia. Therefore the preconference regards it as necessary to declare all the groups in Czechoslovakia which count themselves in the Left Opposition to be sympathizing groups." See preconference resolution on the Left Opposition in Czechoslovakia, *Documents of the Fourth International*, 40-41.

456. T Papers, 10561, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Original in English. A differently edited version in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

457. The poll established a New York committee of Cannon, Shachtman, and Oehler; the results were recorded in the minutes of the resident committee, 15 February 1933.

458. Cannon to Swabeck, 19 February 1933, C Papers, Box 3, F 5.

459. T Papers, 5474.

460. T Papers, 10308, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

461. B Papers, Series III, Box 9, F 4.

462. The preconference reorganized the International Secretariat to include a representative from the most stable European sections: the Russian, German, French, Belgian, and Greek.

463. See Trotsky, "The Majority Has No Right to Impatience," 7 March 1933.

464. Volunteering as a Russian stenographer for Trotsky, Sara Weber served in this capacity from June 1933 through January 1934.
465. T Papers, 8265, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.
466. Differently edited version in Trotsky, *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*.
467. Trotsky, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat: The German Workers Will Rise Again—Stalinism, Never!", 14 March 1933, *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*, 375-384.
468. C Papers, Box 3, F 5. Differently edited version in Cannon, *Communist League of America*.
469. Cannon, "Concessions to the Minority," April 1933, *Communist League of America*, 246-248.
470. PRL.
471. Cannon, "Concessions to the Minority," op. cit.
472. PRL.
473. Cannon, "Deadlock in the National Committee," *Communist League of America*, 243-244.
474. Communist League of Struggle, "To the National Committee, Communist League of America (Opposition)," 15 February 1933, T Papers, 13950.
475. "Joint Meeting of League and Weisbord Lays Ground for Close Collaboration," *Militant*, 8 April 1933.
476. T Papers, 467.
477. Cannon, "Our Work in the PMA," *Communist League of America*, 249-252.
478. Shachtman put forward the motion. Minutes of the resident committee, 3 April 1933.
479. See Shachtman, "Motion on the Illinois Mining Campaign," 24 February 1933.
480. T Papers, 5070.
481. Cannon, "The Anti-Cannon Bloc," 30 April 1932, op. cit., 101-107.
482. Jan Frankel wrote about the October 1930 German conference in "Die Haltung des Genossen Landau in der österreichischen und deutschen Fragen" [Comrade Landau's Role in the Austrian and German

Questions], 6 January 1931, T Papers. 16850. He described the conference as based not on delegates elected by proportional representation, but on "membership lists with compromised mandates." He quoted Oskar Seipold's account of the Ludwigshafen delegation at the conference: "Frenzel (Ludwigshafen) had 31 votes at the conference, supposedly representing 155 members. But when I was there recently, *I determined that the entire palatinate has only about 60 (sixty!!) members, of which at least 20 percent are drunks.*"

483. Trotsky, "The Negro Question in America (The Discussion in Prinkipo)," 28 February 1933, *On Black Nationalism*, 20-31.

484. Shachtman. "Communism and the Negro," March 1933, T Papers. 17244.

485. Trotsky's secretaries excerpted key sections of the extensive 1930-32 correspondence of Trotsky and Andrés Nin. This was published as a special supplement to *International Bulletin of the Communist Left Opposition* no. 2, 3 (April 1933) and reprinted as an appendix in Trotsky, *Spanish Revolution*, 369-400.

486. Abern's report was attached to the 3 April 1933 minutes of the resident committee. He wrote that 12 issues of the triweekly *Militant* were published, with an average press run of 6,000. The New York branch distributed on average 2,000 copies of each issue and Chicago, 500. In all, some 24,000 copies of the triweekly were distributed.

487. B Papers, Series III, Box 9, F 4.

488. We have been unable to locate this letter.

489. B Papers, Series III, Box 9, F 4.

490. T Papers. 7987, in French, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings 1932-33*.

491. B Papers, Series III, Box 9, F 4.

492. Resident committee meetings of 6 and 7 April 1933. See Cannon, "Deadlock in the National Committee," op. cit.

493. The Stalinists were preparing to replay their successful Amsterdam Congress against war with an international congress against fascism. The congress was eventually held in Paris, 4-6 June 1933; Left Opposition delegates were brutally excluded. See Trotsky, "A Declaration to the Congress Against Fascism from Delegates of the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists)," April 1933, *Writings 1932-33*, 173-182.

494. The I.S. plenum scheduled for May 6-7 was not held until May 13-16.

495. G Papers, Box 3.

496. PRL.

497. Glotzer described the *Breeze* article and Allard's reply in a 16 April 1933 letter to the National Committee, attached to the April 19 resident committee minutes. Cannon wrote the *Militant's* response to the redbaiting attack. See "Red-Baiting in the Illinois Mine Fields," 29 April 1933, *Communist League of America*, 257-259.

498. Cannon, "Our Work in the PMA," op. cit.

499. PRL.

500. S Papers, Box 6, F 25.

501. Trotsky, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat: The German Workers Will Rise Again—Stalinism, Never!", op. cit., Trotsky insisted:

"It must be said clearly, plainly, openly: Stalinism in Germany has had its August 4. Henceforth, the advanced workers will only speak of the period of the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy with a burning sense of shame, with words of hatred and curses. The official German Communist Party is doomed. From now on it will only decompose, crumble, and melt into the void. German Communism can be reborn only on a new basis and with a new leadership."

502. G Papers, Box 3.

503. T Papers, 10310, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

504. Sara Weber was about to depart for Prinkipo to serve as Trotsky's secretary.

505. B Papers, Series III, Box 9, F 4.

506. "Resolution," n.d. [April-May 1933], C Papers, Box 42, F 6. This resolution was probably completed by Rose Karsner, since Cannon left New York in late April to attend the Mooney congress in Chicago.

507. Swabeck was stranded in Europe for a considerable amount of time without funds. In a 24 May 1933 letter to Swabeck (C Papers, Box 15, F 7), Rose Karsner explained:

"Your indignation directed at Jim for not supplying you with funds for your return, while justifiable, is somewhat misdirected. You seem to have forgotten the situation here and the elements we deal with. Here are some of the facts on this particular point. Not very political, but symptomatic of the character of our opposition.

"The day Jim and Max were to leave, Field went to Rivera for a

\$200 loan, which both Field and Jim understood was to be divided thus: \$150 to Max and \$50 to be cabled to Prinkipo for your trip to Paris. Jim's bus was leaving at 4:30 p.m. Max knew about it. They were to have a small meeting before he left. Field brought the check just as Jim and I were going out to lunch. Max was already waiting for it outside. When we came out we found Field and Max and the check which Field turned over to Max. Not thinking that Max would act as he did, we went on saying we would be back soon and left Max holding the check. When we returned, no Max, no Field, no check. Time for catching the bus was approaching and still no Max. Finally Jim had to leave, still thinking that Max would turn the money into the office in the regular manner and get the sum allotted him. Instead of that, Field turned up about 4:45. When I asked about the money he was greatly surprised, stating that he had given Max the check and that was all he knew about it. Max came back about 5:00. I asked him for the money and he informed me that he had cashed the check, without even getting a receipt made out to Rivera first, and that I was under a misapprehension. That he was to get the entire amount, and that we were to raise another \$100 for you and him which was to be sent to Paris later. Marty later corroborated this statement, though Jim's note said definitely the other way. Anyhow, he kept the full amount and went off."

508. A photocopy of notebook entries with partial, handwritten minutes of the plenum, in French, is in B Papers, Box 35, F 6.

509. G Papers, Box 3. Copyright Stanford University.

510. Cannon to Shachtman, 27 April 1933, C Papers, Box 3, F 6.

511. "LO Scores at Chicago Mooney Conference," *Militant*, 6 May 1933; "National Mooney Meet Lays Basis for Broad Fight," *Militant*, 13 May 1933.

512. Glotzer to National Committee, 10 May 1933, G Papers, Box 1.

513. A Papers, Section IV, 11:42.

514. The May ILO plenum endorsed Trotsky's call for a new party in Germany, but the majority of the German leadership opposed it.

515. Trotsky, "A Letter to the Politburo," 15 March 1933, *Writings 1932-33*, 141-143.

516. Shachtman made this proposal at the 11 August 1932 resident committee meeting. Shachtman and Glotzer voted in favor, Cannon, Gordon, and Oehler opposed. Abern and Basky were absent.

517. A Papers, Section IV, 11:42.

518. Trotsky, "It Is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew," 15 July 1933, *Writings 1932-33*, 304-311.
519. "Right Wing Move to Expel Militants from PMA," *Militant*, 3 June 1933; "PMA in Perspective: A Review of the Past and Signs for the Future," *Militant*, 24 June 1933. Angelo was expelled in October.
520. Trotsky, "The Left Socialist Organizations and Our Tasks," 15 June 1933, *Writings 1932-33*, 274-278.
521. Shachtman is referring to the League's printing press.
522. G Papers, Box 1.
523. ICOR sponsored immigration of Jews to Birobidjan. The International Workers Order was a federation of fraternal organizations formed in 1930 from a split in the Workmen's Circle. It provided low-cost health and life insurance and sponsored cultural and sporting events.
524. Eastman worked on a film about the Russian Revolution, *Tsar to Lenin*; quarrels with his collaborator and the resulting lawsuits delayed its release until 1937.
525. T Papers, 15519.
526. T Papers, 8266, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Original in English. Differently edited version in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.
527. A Papers, Section IV, 11:42.
528. The "Pepperiade" was the 1923-24 period of John Pepper's influence in the American Communist Party (then known as the Workers Party). In fall 1923, the emerging Cannon-Foster faction insisted on moving Party headquarters from New York to Chicago as part of their successful effort to wrest control from the Lovestone-Ruthenberg-Pepper faction. On Lovestone's initiative Party headquarters moved back to New York in 1927.
529. Gastonia, North Carolina was the center of a militant CP-led textile workers strike in 1929.
530. The New York CLA organized the Greek workers group Protomagia in fall 1932. Around the same time Chicago supporters of the CLA founded the Friends of the *Militant* Club to organize fundraising and other activities on behalf of the paper.
531. PRL.
532. We have been unable to locate minutes of resident committee meetings between 7 April and 23 November 1933.
533. G Papers, Box 3.

534. The June 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA) was the early centerpiece of the Roosevelt administration's economic program. Drafted during a nationwide strike wave in the first months of 1933, the NRA's Section 7.a. recognized the right of workers to organize unions, bargain collectively, and pick their union representatives without company interference. A strike was sweeping the New Jersey silk industry at the time Shachtman wrote this letter.

An "Open Letter to All Party Members" was adopted by the Extraordinary National Conference of the CP in early July and published in the 13 July 1933 *Daily Worker*. Complaining that "work in the reformist trade unions has in general been neglected by the Communists," the letter advocated the united-front tactic and rooting the party in major factories and industrial locations.

535. G papers, Box 3.

536. Glotzer to Shachtman and Abern, 23 September 1933, G Papers, Box 1.

537. Shachtman is referring to "The Declaration of Four" (26 August 1933), submitted to a conference of left-socialist and Communist organizations held in Paris, 27-28 August 1933. See Trotsky, *Writings 1933-34*, 49-52.

538. Trotsky to International Secretariat, 22 September 1933, T Papers, 7996.

539. Differently edited version in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

540. T Papers, 5074.

541. Shachtman to Trotsky, 7 September 1933, T Papers, 5073.

542. The League's negotiations with Gitlow's Workers Communist League soon deadlocked over the WCL's refusal to endorse "The Declaration of Four" or make a clear statement against "socialism in one country"; see Cannon to Trotsky, 24 October 1933, T Papers, 471. Gitlow's group joined the SP in 1934.

543. T Papers, 10562, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

544. T Papers, 10313, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. First three paragraphs translated from Russian by PRL, final paragraph from English version in the archive. Another translation in Trotsky, *Writings Supplement 1929-33*.

545. The *New International* did not begin publication until July 1934.

546. T Papers, 5477.

547. Swabeck reported that the League had added about 150 members and a number of new branches in the past year; membership now stood at 350 in 26 branches. The Spartacus Youth Clubs had nearly 200 members. CLA workers clubs were active in Chicago and Kansas City, with an Italian club in Chicago and Greek and Jewish clubs in New York. Negotiations toward forming a new party were continuing with the Gitlow group and the United Workers Party, a recent split from the Proletarian Party centered in Chicago. See Swabeck, "Report on the Communist League of America (Opposition)," 15 December 1933, T Papers, 17298.

548. T Papers, 10315, copyright 2001 The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Translation from Russian by PRL.

549. Relations with Weisbord atrophied while leading CLA NC members were out of town in spring and summer 1933. Cannon proposed in September that the two groups hold a joint public meeting and appoint committees on unification (Cannon to Glotzer, 25 September 1933, G Papers, Box 2). Weisbord claimed to support the turn toward a new party, but his public attacks on the League continued. After issuing a trade-union thesis that endorsed the Stalinist "red" unions, the CLS physically attacked two CLA members, leading to a breakoff of negotiations. See Swabeck, "Report of the Communist League of America (Opposition)," 15 December 1933, T Papers, 17298.

Soon after he wrote this letter to Shachtman, Trotsky met with a youth representative of the CLS. He subsequently wrote to Weisbord:

"In your last letter of December 26 you declare that you are ready at any moment to fuse with the League without any preliminary organizational demands whatsoever and that you agree in disputed questions to subordinate yourself to our international organization. All this sounds perfectly good, and with this text in hand I would have been ready to immediately raise the question before the I.S. on practical steps toward your unification with our American section.

"But in this very same letter you remark, as if in passing, 'We think that the American League is not a true section of the Left Opposition, that it carries out policies entirely counterposed to the spirit of the new International.' If this is your opinion, how can you fuse with the American League?"

— Trotsky to Weisbord, 29 January 1934, T Papers, 10861, translation from Russian by PRL.

Trotsky concluded that the plan for unification between the two groups was no longer realistic. The Communist League of Struggle flirted briefly with the Gitlow and Field groups in 1934.

Glossary

Abern, Martin (1898–1949) Joined SP youth in Minneapolis, 1912; SP, 1915; IWW, 1916; served prison term for refusing to register for WWI; founding American Communist, on central committee almost continuously from 1920; national secretary of CP youth, 1922–24; CP Chicago organizer, 1924–26; ILD assistant national secretary, 1926–28; delegate to CI Fourth Congress and YCI Third Congress and elected to YCI executive, 1922; member of CP Cannon faction; expelled from CP in 1928 for Trotskyism; founding member of CLA and on NC, 1929–34; a leader of Shachtman faction in 1931–33 fight; continued cliquist opposition to Cannon thereafter; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938–40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman in 1940; elected to NC of Shachtmanite Workers Party, 1940; remained inveterate cliquist in WP until his death.

Adler, Victor (1852–1918) Leader of Austrian Social Democracy; launched its first newspaper, *Gleichheit (Equality)*, 1886; representative of United Austrian Labor Party at First Congress of Second International, 1889; member of Austrian parliament, 1902–18; opposed Bernsteinian revisionism but sought conciliation; supported Austria in WWI; foreign minister of Austria for several days prior to his death.

Allard, Germinal (Gerry) (1908–1965) Miner active in “Save the Union” campaign, Illinois coalfields, 1927–28; founder of National Miners Union and organizer in Colorado; expelled from CP for protesting Cannon’s expulsion, 1928; supported *Militant* for a few months but rejoined CP, 1929; left CP after disastrous NMU strike and joined CLA, 1931; leader of PMA and editor of *Progressive Miner*, 1932–33; left CLA to join CPLA, 1933; founding member of WPUS, 1934; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936; remained in SP after expulsion of Trotskyists.

American Federation of Labor (AFL) Trade-union federation, primarily of craft unions, founded in 1881, led by Samuel Gompers,

1885–1924. In 1935 John L. Lewis of the UMW initiated the Committee of Industrial Organizations within the AFL to organize workers along industrial lines, leading to a split and the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1938. The two organizations merged in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO.

American Workers Party (AWP) Successor organization to CPLA; founded as Provisional Organizing Committee for the American Workers Party in December 1933; led by A.J. Muste; AWP and affiliated unemployed leagues led successful Toledo Auto-Lite strike, spring 1934; fused with CLA to form WPUS, December 1934.

Amsterdam Congress Stalinist-organized antiwar congress, an opportunist bloc with liberals and pacifists, held in Amsterdam, 27–29 August 1932; ILO intervened to fight for political independence of proletariat and against pacifist illusions.

Andrade, Juan Rodriguez (1897–1981) A leader of Madrid Young Socialists who supported Russian Revolution and call for Third International, 1918; founding member of Spanish CP and editor of *El Comunista*, 1920–26; imprisoned in 1921, 1923, and 1924 for Communist activity; expelled from CP for support to Russian United Opposition, 1927; founding member of Spanish Left Opposition and editor of its journal, *Comunismo*; founder of POUM and member of its central committee and executive committee, 1935–38; POUM representative to Madrid Popular Front Committee, 1936; with Franco's victory, fled to France, where he spent WWII in concentration camps; attempted to revive POUM after WWII; became a supporter of Pabloite Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire.

Angelo, Joseph A leader of National Miners Union from Springfield, Illinois; expelled from CP for protesting Cannon's expulsion, 1928; founding member of CLA; active in PMA, 1932–33; expelled from PMA in anti-Communist purge, October 1933.

Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee An ongoing alliance of the Russian trade unions with the British Trades Union Congress (TUC), founded in 1925 and maintained by Stalin and the Comintern as the TUC tops betrayed the 1926 British General Strike. The TUC walked out of the Committee in 1927.

Appeal to Reason Independent weekly, blending populist tradition with socialism; published in Kansas, 1895–1917; only U.S. socialist

journal ever to achieve circulation of more than half a million a week.

Arbeiterstimme (Workers Voice) Biweekly organ of Communist Party of Austria (Opposition), founded and led by Frey after his expulsion from Austrian CP; published 1927-33.

Archio-Marxists Organization expelled from Greek CP in 1924; took name from its journal, *Archives of Marxism*, begun in 1923, that sought to make Marxist classics available in Greek; grew close to views of Russian Left Opposition during 1920s and began publishing Trotsky's works in Greek; applied to join ILO in June 1930; renamed Organization of Bolshevik-Leninists of Greece (Oppositionists), fall 1930; represented on ILO I.S. by Myrtos, mid-1931 to June 1932, and Witte, July 1932 to September 1933; Witte broke with ILO over turn to building new parties and new international; Archio-Marxists split, with majority under Vitsoris adhering to Trotskyists while minority under Witte joined London Bureau, 1934.

Bartolomeo, Nicola Di (Fosco) (1901-1946) Joined Italian SP youth, 1915; founding Italian Communist, 1921; imprisoned for antimilitarist activity, 1922-26; in exile in France from 1927; supported Bordiga's Left Faction and expelled from Italian CP, 1928; led pro-Trotskyist faction among Bordigists from 1930; joined New Italian Opposition (NOI) in August 1931; metalworker active in CGTU; with NOI's dissolution, formed group around journal *La Nostra Parola*, 1934; entered Italian SP with ILO, 1935; fought in POUM militia in Spanish Civil War, 1936-37; joined Molinier's group upon return to France, 1938; arrested by French police, 1939; released in 1940, but was soon rearrested and handed over to Italian fascists; released in August 1943, led a Naples group that merged with Bordigist remnant of Italian CP to found Partito Operaio Comunista, Italian section of Fourth International, 1945. The POC was expelled from the FI for ultraleftism in 1948.

Basky, Louis (1882-1938) Veteran of 1919 Hungarian Revolution; emigrated to U.S. and became leader of CP Hungarian Federation in 1920s; he and a group of supporters, expelled from CP in 1927-28, were independently won to Trotskyism by Russian Oppositionists in New York; founding member of CLA; co-opted briefly to CLA NC, 1932; founding member of WPUS; expelled with Oehler in late 1935; a leader of Oehler's Revolutionary

Workers League (RWL); expelled with Stamm from RWL in 1938, shortly before his death.

Bernstein, Eduard (1850–1932) A leader of German Social Democracy (SPD), 1875–1928; originator and chief proponent of revisionist current holding that socialism could be brought about by the peaceful evolution of capitalism; authored *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus (Evolutionary Socialism)*, 1899; with Kautsky, Engels' literary executor; served in Reichstag several times between 1902 and 1918; adopted pacifist stand during WWI and voted against war credits, 1915; joined Kautsky's USPD, 1917; rejoined SPD, 1918; re-elected to Reichstag, 1920–28.

Bittelman, Alexander (1890–1982) Member of Jewish Bund in Russia; emigrated to U.S., 1912; a leader of SP Jewish Federation and founding American Communist; leader of CP Jewish Federation and Foster's chief factional lieutenant, 1924–28; CI representative to India, 1929–31; head of CP Jewish Bureau during WWII; imprisoned under Smith Act in 1950s; expelled from CP as "revisionist," 1959.

Blackwell, Russell (Rosalio Negrete) (1904–1969) Member of central committee of Mexican Young Communist League, expelled for support to LO, 1930; arrested and deported from Mexico, 1930; in New York, acted as Spanish secretary for CLA contact with Latin America, 1930; supported Weisbord in New York branch, December 1930; during period of evident demoralization left CLA in early 1931; readmitted to CLA, January 1933; founding member, WPUS; supported Oehler faction and expelled from WPUS, 1935; founding member of Oehler's Revolutionary Workers League; in Spain during Spanish Civil War, 1936–39; arrested and held by Republican government for several months; broke with RWL after return, arguing that Spanish Stalinism was embryo of fascism; a founder of anarchist Libertarian League, 1954.

Blasco Pseudonym of Pietro Tresso.

Bleeker, Sylvia (1901–1988) Born in Byelorussia, became partisan of Bolsheviks, 1917; emigrated to U.S., 1920; met lifelong companion, Morris Lewit, on ship; as milliner, active in NYC garment unions; joined CP; supporter of Foster faction, 1925–29; attended Muste's Brookwood Labor College, 1925–26; won to Trotskyism

and expelled from CP, 1930; joined CLA, 1930; active in Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, 1930; editorial board, *Unser Kampf*, 1932-33; supported Shachtman faction in CLA fight; with Shachtman, went over to collaboration with Cannon, 1934; founding member of WPUS; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP; supported Cannon in 1939-40 fight; manager of Pioneer Publishers during WWII; alternate SWP NC member during WWII; in Europe with Lewit reestablishing ties with local Trotskyists, 1947-48; NY branch SWP leader, 1950s; retired from party activity, early 1960s.

Bordiga, Amadeo (1889-1970) Leader of left wing of Italian SP, 1918-21; founding leader of Italian CP, 1921; elected to ECCL, 1922; delegate to CI Fourth Congress, 1922, and Fifth Congress, 1924; leader of Left Faction of Italian CP opposed to New Economic Policy in USSR, tactic of the united front, and struggle for democratic demands; lost leadership of Italian CP, 1926; imprisoned in Italy, 1926-29; expelled from Italian CP, 1930; Bordiga's followers in exile, represented by Prometeo Group, adhered to ILO, 1930-33; he abstained from political activity, 1930-43; thereafter resumed writing and participated in various ultraleft groupings.

Bordigists Followers of Amadeo Bordiga in Italy in 1920s and 1930s; organized in exile as the Prometeo Group.

Brandler, Heinrich (1881-1967) Bricklayer; Social Democrat from 1901; member of Spartakusbund, 1915-19; founding German Communist, 1918, and member of central committee, 1919-24; leader of CP during aborted revolution of 1923; scapegoated by Zinoviev and Stalin and removed from leadership, 1924; expelled for organizing Right Opposition, January 1929; leader of Communist Party Opposition (KPO), German section of Right Opposition; leader of International Right Opposition in exile in Paris after Nazi victory; KPO disintegrated after fall of France in 1940; spent WWII in Cuba; returned to West Germany in 1948.

Browder, Earl (1891-1973) SP member, 1907-12; worked with Foster's Syndicalist League, 1912-15; rejoined SP as left-winger after Russian Revolution; edited *Workers World* with Cannon in Kansas City, 1919; imprisoned for conspiracy, 1919-21; joined Communist movement, 1921; Foster factional lieutenant,

1924–28; worked in Moscow and on CI assignment, 1926–28; American CP general secretary, 1930–45; expelled for “opportunism,” 1946.

Buehler, August A. (Shorty) (1878–1934) IWW member from at least 1913; supporter of SP left wing in Kansas City during WWI; founding American Communist; leader of CP in Kansas City and member of district executive committee; expelled for protesting Cannon’s expulsion, 1928; founding member of CLA; ran radical bookstore in Kansas City.

Bukharin, Nikolai (1888–1938) Bolshevik from 1906; elected to Central Committee, 1917; editor of *Pravda*, 1918–26; head of Comintern, 1926–29; leading exponent of concessions to private peasant enterprise, 1925–28; allied with Stalin against Trotsky-Zinoviev United Opposition, 1926–28; ousted from leadership posts, 1929; capitulated to Stalin and became *Izvestia* editor in chief, 1933–37; arrested, 1937; convicted in third Moscow Trial; executed.

Burnham, James (1905–1986) Philosophy professor at New York University; was influenced by Sidney Hook and joined Musteite AWP; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; co-editor with Shachtman of *New International*, 1934–40; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938–40; ideological leader of SWP minority in 1939–40 faction fight; broke with Marxism and resigned from Shachtman’s Workers Party, May 1940; prominent cold warrior in late 1940s; founding editorial board member of right-wing *National Review*, 1955.

Cannon, James Patrick (1890–1974) Joined SP, 1908; joined IWW, 1911; IWW agitator and organizer in Midwest, 1912–14; active in Kansas City IWW, 1914–19; joined pro-Bolshevik SP left wing, 1919; founding American Communist and chairman of first legal CP 1921–23; in Moscow 1922–23, serving on presidium of Communist International, June–November 1922; CP central committee, 1920–28; coleader with Foster of Cannon-Foster faction, 1924–25; led own faction, 1925–28; won to Trotskyism at CI Sixth Congress, summer 1928; expelled in October for his views; founding leader of CLA, 1929; principal leader and member of NC of American Trotskyist organizations for next 25 years; indicted under Smith Act, 1941; imprisoned, 1944; retired as SWP national secretary in 1953; remained national chairman until his death.

Capelis, Herbert Member of New York CLA branch from 1930; dental technician; worked in ILD until expelled in 1931; co-opted to National Youth Committee, January 1932; secretary of New York CLA branch, 1932.

Carlson, Oliver National secretary of SP youth from 1919; broke with SP and went to Moscow in 1921, where he helped found Young Communist International; national secretary of American CP youth group, 1922; representative to YCI in Moscow, 1923-24; founding member of CLA and alternate member of NC, 1929, but was suspended for indiscipline later that year; joined AWP, 1934; opposed fusion with CLA; became teacher and author.

Carmody, Jack Former Irish nationalist; member of CLA in New York; toured Illinois coalfields for CLA, fall 1932; Cannon supporter.

Carter, Joseph (1910-1970) Pseudonym of Joseph Friedman. Joined SP youth, 1924; fought for unity with Communists and supported CP slate in 1927 elections; joined CP youth, 1928; leader of City College of New York fraction; expelled from CP youth, 1928; founding member of CLA; leader of SYCs and editorial board member of *Young Spartacus*; generally supported Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1936; founding member of SWP and alternate member of NC, 1938-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940; leading member of Shachtman's Workers Party in 1940s; left Shachtmanites in early 1950s.

Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) Chinese linguist and professor at Beijing University; a leader of May 4 Movement against imperialism, 1919; founding Chinese Communist and general secretary, 1921-27; delegate to CI Fourth Congress, 1922; despite misgivings, acceded to Stalinist policy of entering Guomindang and subordinating Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to nationalist leadership, the policy which shipwrecked Second Chinese Revolution, 1925-27; resigned from CCP leadership, 1927; won to Trotskyism and expelled from CCP, 1929; led Trotskyist group around journal *Proletarian*, which united with three other pro-ILO groups to found Communist League of China, May 1931; arrested by Guomindang, 1932, and sentenced to 13 years; released in 1937; his relationship to Trotskyist movement grew increasingly attenuated as Chen

advocated “democratic” alliance with bourgeois forces against Japan; broke with Trotskyism, rejecting defense of USSR, and supported “democratic” imperialists in WWII.

Clarke, George (1913–1964) Expelled from CP youth, 1928; founding member, CLA; Midwest field organizer, 1931–32; supporter of Cannon faction; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938–53; Detroit SWP organizer, 1938–39; SWP maritime fraction in 1940s; editor of *Fourth International*, 1949–53; SWP representative in Europe and delegate to FI Third Congress, 1951; coleader with Bert Cochran in 1953 split from SWP.

Collinet, Michel (Paul Sizoff) (1904–1977) Joined French CP youth, 1925; collaborated on *La Lutte des classes*, 1928; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929, and Ligue Communiste, 1930; member of executive committee of Opposition Unitaire; quit Ligue in opposition to Trotsky on trade-union question; founder and member of Gauche Communiste and its successor, Fraction de la Gauche Communiste, 1931–33; joined French SP, 1935; published POUM French paper *La Révolution espagnole*, 1936; expelled from SP as supporter of Pivert’s left wing, 1938; member of Pivert’s centrist organization, 1938–39; member of Resistance during WWII; active in Force Ouvrière, CIA-sponsored split from CGT, post-WWII; author of several historical and sociological books.

Communist International (CI, Comintern) Also known as Third International. International revolutionary organization founded on Lenin’s initiative in Moscow, 1919; national Communist parties were sections of the international. Underwent degeneration after 1923 as Stalin faction consolidated control of Soviet state; dissolved by Stalin in 1943.

Communistes Greek-language journal published by CLA from December 1931 through at least November 1932.

Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire (CGTU) French trade-union federation that originated in 1921 split from reformist-led trade-union federation, Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT); comprising syndicalists, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, and Communists, affiliated with RILU in November 1922; under

leadership of French CP from late 1923; returned to CGT in 1936 with the Stalinist turn to popular front.

Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA) Founded in 1929 by Muste; heterogeneous group of leftward-moving workers, unemployed, and intellectuals; changed name to American Workers Party, December 1933. (See also AWP.)

Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Federation of industrial unions originating in 1935 as Committee for Industrial Organization of American Federation of Labor, led by Lewis of UMW. CIO-affiliated unions were expelled from the AFL in 1938; the two reunited in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO.

Coover, Oscar (1887-1950) Member of SP, 1904-07; electrical worker and delegate to Minneapolis Central Labor Union, 1912-24; joined Communist movement, 1919; local secretary of Railroad Shopmen's Strike Committee, 1922; blacklisted from industry; expelled from Minneapolis CLU for Communist activity, 1924; member of Minneapolis CP executive committee, 1922-24 and 1927-28; expelled from CP, November 1928; founding member of CLA and alternate on NC, 1931-34; founding member of WPUS, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding SWPer and leader of Minneapolis branch; one of 18 SWP leaders imprisoned for opposition to WWII, 1944.

Cowl, Carl (1900-1997) Founding member of CP youth, 1919; member of Minneapolis CP youth expelled for Trotskyism, 1928; founding member of CLA; main Shachtman faction operative in Minneapolis, 1932-33; founding member of WPUS; supporter of Oehler faction, 1934-35; founding member of Oehler's Revolutionary Workers League, 1935; expelled from RWL with Basky and Stamm in 1938; part of Stamm's organization, also called RWL, 1938 into 1940s; quit politics and became musicologist; in 1980s joined state-capitalist International Socialist Organization.

Dunne, Miles (1896-1958) Brother of William and Vincent Dunne; won to communism while in U.S. army in WWI; founding American Communist and leading member of Minneapolis branch; expelled from CP for opposing Cannon's expulsion, 1928; a leader of Minneapolis Teamster strikes, 1934; organizer for Teamsters and leader of strike in Fargo, North Dakota, 1934; editor of

Northwest Organizer; secretary-treasurer and then president of Minneapolis Teamster Local 544, one of 29 leaders of Teamsters and SWP indicted under Smith Act in 1941; acquitted in trial.

Dunne, Vincent R. (1889–1970) Brother of William and Miles Dunne; founding member of IWW; joined Communist movement in 1920; prominent Communist in Minneapolis labor movement; supporter of Cannon faction; expelled from CP as Trotskyist, 1928; founding member of CLA and on NC, 1929–34; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; central leader of 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP and on NC from 1938; acting national labor secretary, 1943; one of 18 SWP leaders indicted in 1941 under Smith Act; imprisoned, 1944; leader of SWP until his death.

Dunne, William F. (Bill) (1887–1953) Brother of Vincent and Miles Dunne; SP member from 1910 and union leader in Butte, Montana; joined Communist movement, 1919; member of CP leading body, 1922–28; representative to CI, 1924–25; alternate member of ECCI, 1925–28; *Daily Worker* coeditor, 1924–27; close collaborator of Cannon and coleader of Cannon faction, 1925–28; remained in CP after Cannon's expulsion; expelled in 1946 for "left deviationism."

Eastman, Max (1883–1969) SP member and *Masses* editor from 1912; member of SP left wing but did not join Communist movement; publicized views of Trotsky's Left Opposition in U.S. in *Since Lenin Died* and *The Real Situation in Russia*; translator of several of Trotsky's books; helped finance early CLA; argued against dialectical materialism in early 1930s and turned sharply right during Moscow Trials; became *Readers Digest* editor during WWII.

Edwards, John Member of SP left wing in Michigan, 1919; founding American Communist; delegate to Young Communist International Second Congress, 1922; attended CI Fifth Congress, 1924; member of brickmakers union in Chicago; expelled from CP, 1928; founding member of CLA and alternate on NC, 1931–34; close collaborator of Glotzer in Chicago, 1932–34; made pretense of being in separate "Chicago group," but supported Shachtman faction on all essentials in 1931–33 fight.

Felix (1900-1943) Pseudonym of Michiel Mazliak. Polish fur worker active in French CP Jewish section; expelled from CP, 1928; member of editorial board of *Paz' Contre le courant*, 1929; defended USSR in Chinese Eastern Railroad dispute and joined *Ligue Communiste*, 1930; leader of Jewish Group; member of *Ligue* executive committee, 1931; initially supported Molinier on trade-union question, but led Jewish Group in its efforts to collaborate with Rosmer, late 1931; split to join *Gauche Communiste*, 1933; founder and member of *Union Communiste*, 1933-39; arrested by Nazis, 1942; executed in concentration camp, 1943.

Field, B.J. (1900-1977) Economist and statistician; joined CLA, 1931; expelled for indiscipline, 1932; visited Trotsky in Turkey, 1932; regained CLA membership, March 1933, and was assigned to organize support for CLA among intellectuals; subsequently assigned to CLA hotel and restaurant workers fraction; leader of 1934 New York hotel strike when he was expelled from CLA for indiscipline; later formed League for a Revolutionary Workers Party and published *New International Bulletin* irregularly from October 1935 to March 1937; expelled from LRWP and quit politics for real estate. Following Field's expulsion, the LRWP vanished.

Fischer, Ruth (1895-1961) Founding member and leader of Austrian CP, 1918; member of German CP left wing from 1919; elected to central committee, 1923; promoted to coleadership of party with Maslow after removal of Brandler, 1924; expelled from German CP for support to Russian United Opposition, 1926; participated in founding conference of Leninbund, April 1928, but left a month later and sought readmission to KPD, as a consequence of Zinoviev's capitulation to Stalin; in exile in Paris after Hitler's victory, joined Trotskyists and was member of ILO I.S., 1934-36; resided in U.S. from 1941; author of self-serving *Stalin and German Communism* (1948).

Fosco Pseudonym of Nicola Di Bartolomeo.

Foster, William Z. (1881-1961) Member of SP, 1901-09; member of IWW, 1909-11; founded Syndicalist League to "bore from within" AFL, 1912; led 1919 Chicago meatpacking organizing drive and national steel strike; founded TUEL, 1920; delegate to founding conference of RILU, 1921; joined CP, 1921; on CP leading body from 1922; coleader with Cannon of Cannon-Foster

faction, 1924–25; led own faction, 1925–28; passed over for party leadership after Lovestone's expulsion in favor of Browder; CP chairman, 1945–57.

Frank, Pierre (1905–1984) Engineer; joined French CP, 1925; supported Russian United Opposition, 1927; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929, and Ligue Communiste, 1930; member of executive committee, 1930–32; leader with R. Molinier of Ligue faction that supported Trotsky on trade-union question; member of ILO Administrative Secretariat, 1931; Trotsky's secretary, July 1932–April 1933; leader of French Trotskyists during entry into French SP, 1934–35; expelled from Trotskyist movement with R. Molinier for publishing their own paper (*La Commune*), 1935; rejoined Trotskyists briefly before being expelled again, 1936; coleader of centrist Molinier group opposing French Trotskyists, 1936–39; condemned to prison for antiwar activity, fled to Britain, 1940; worked with Workers International League before being interned in Britain, 1940–43; founding member of reunified French Trotskyist organization, 1944; member of CC from 1946; member of I.S. of Fourth International; part of revisionist current led by Michel Pablo that destroyed FI, 1951–53; leading member of Pablo's United Secretariat until retirement in 1979.

Frankel, Jan (1906–1984) Joined Czechoslovakian CP in 1923; cofounder of Czechoslovakian Left Opposition, 1927; delegate to first international ILO conference, April 1930; Trotsky's secretary, April 1930–January 1933; sent to work in Germany as Hitler consolidated power, he was expelled from the country in February 1934; served on ILO I.S., 1934; led efforts to unify Czechoslovakian Left Opposition groups, 1935–36; Trotsky's secretary in Norway, June–October 1935 and again in Mexico, February–October 1937; sole other witness besides Trotsky at 1937 Dewey Commission hearings; moved to U.S. in 1937 and became member of SWP; left SWP with Shachtman in 1940; member of Shachtman organization until 1941.

Freiheit (Morgenfreiheit) Daily Yiddish newspaper published by American CP beginning in 1922; gradually broke with CP during Cold War; ceased publication in 1988.

Frey, Josef (1882–1957) Founder of Austrian Social Democrats' student organization; editor for central SP publications before

1914; officer in Austrian army in WWI; chairman of Viennese Soldiers Council and commander of Red Guards, 1918; expelled from SP for electoral support to CP, October 1920; leader of Austrian CP from January 1921; expelled from CP as supporter of United Opposition, January 1927; with Landau, founded Communist Party of Austria (Opposition), 1927; expelled Landau, 1928; in competition with Landau's group, sought recognition as Austrian section of ILO until 1932; renamed group Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class and reorganized it as clandestine cells, 1934; emigrated to Switzerland, 1938; supported "democratic" imperialists in WWII. His supporters continued as a tiny sect long after his death.

Gauche Communiste Group formed in 1931 by split from Ligue Communiste on trade-union question; led by Collinet and Claude Naville (brother of P. Naville); collaborated with Rosmer; published *Le Bulletin de la gauche communiste*; had international ties with Landau.

Geltman, Emanuel (Manny Garrett) (1914-1995) Joined CLA in 1929; leader of New York SYC; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; founding member of WPUS, 1934-36; editor of *Young Spartacus*, 1935; entered SP with Trotskyists and helped win leadership of SP youth, 1936-37; founding member of SWP; attended founding conference of Fourth International, 1938; split from SWP in 1940 with Shachtman; in Shachtman's Workers Party, managing editor of *Labor Action*, 1940-41, editor, 1941-43 and 1946-49; quit Shachtman's organization in 1953; with Irving Howe, founding member of editorial board of anticommunist *Dissent* magazine, with which he was associated until his death.

Gérard, Francis Pseudonym of Gérard Rosenthal.

Giganti, Joe Recruited to Communist movement in early 1920s by Abern; member of barbers union; Foster faction supporter; Chicago ILD secretary, 1928; expelled from CP in 1928 for writing a letter to Abern; joined Chicago CLA, 1930; founding member of WPUS; expelled with Oehler in 1935; rejoined Trotskyist movement a few years later, but left again with Goldman-Morrow faction in 1946.

Gitlow, Benjamin (1891–1965) Joined SP youth, 1907, and SP, 1909; founding American Communist; jailed for criminal syndicalism, 1919–22; trade-union spokesman for Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction; expelled with Lovestone in 1929; split from Lovestone with supporters, 1933; briefly flirted with CLA before joining SP, 1934; was government “witness” during anti-Communist witchhunt trials in 1940s and 1950s.

Glotzer, Albert (Albert Gates) (1908–1999) Joined CP youth, 1923; leader of Chicago CP district; member of CP youth national executive, 1927–28; supporter of CP Cannon faction; expelled from CP for Trotskyism in 1928; founding CLA member and on NC, 1929–34; member of editorial committee of *Young Spartacus*, 1932; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931–33 fight; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; leading member of Abern clique; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938–40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman in 1940; leader of Shachtmanite organization, 1940–57; entered SP-SDF with Shachtman, 1958, and shared his subsequent political evolution; a member of anticommunist Democratic Socialists of America at time of death.

Goldman, Albert (1897–1960) Lawyer; left CP in 1933 in opposition to CI’s failure to fight Hitler’s ascension to power; joined CLA but opposed fusion with AWP and joined SP instead; publisher of *Socialist Appeal*, which he turned over to Trotskyists when they entered SP in 1936; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938–46; Trotsky’s U.S. attorney; chief defense counsel of 29 leaders of Teamsters and SWP indicted under Smith Act, 1941; also a defendant, he was imprisoned, 1944; coleader with Felix Morrow of faction that sought accommodation to “democratic” imperialism, 1943–46; left SWP and joined Shachtman’s Workers Party, 1946; left WP and rejoined SP, 1948; became anticommunist and supported U.S. in Korean War.

Gomez, Manuel (1895–1989) Pseudonym of Charles Shipman (Phillips). A founder of Mexican CP; delegate from Mexico to CI Second Congress, 1920; representative of RILU in Central America, 1920–22; active in Chicago CP, 1922–25; secretary for CP-led All-American Anti-Imperialist League, 1925–28; supporter of Cannon faction; remained in CP after expulsion of Trotskyists;

expelled in 1932, but remained active in CP cultural activities until 1937; denounced by CP for opposing Moscow Trials, 1937; became financial analyst and railroad executive.

Gordon, Sam (1910-1982) Won to Left Opposition as student at City College of New York, 1928; wrote articles for *Militant* while traveling in Germany, 1929; joined CLA, 1930; Cannon supporter in CLA fight; worked on *Militant* staff, 1931; briefly co-opted to CLA NC, 1932; field organizer in Pennsylvania, 1932-33; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1939-40; administrative secretary of Fourth International in New York, 1940-41; sailed in merchant marine during WWII; FI IEC in New York, 1940-45, and in Paris, 1946-47; member of New York SWP, 1948-52; lived in England from 1952.

Gorkin, Julián (1902-1987) Pseudonym of Julián Garcia Gomez. As member of Spanish CP youth, worked in Moscow in 1920s; briefly joined OCE; became a leader of Maurín's Workers and Peasants Bloc; a founding leader of POUM, 1935-39; POUM international secretary from July 1936; tried and convicted of "conspiracy" by Republican government, 1938; escaped from prison on eve of Franco's victory and fled to France; joined Spanish SP in exile.

Gould, Nathan (1913-1977) Expelled from Chicago CP youth and joined SYC, 1931; member of SYL NC and by 1935 SYL national secretary; founding member of WPUS, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; became secretary of Chicago Young Peoples Socialist League, 1936; founding member of SWP; delegate with Cannon and Shachtman at founding conference of Fourth International, September 1938; member of FI leading body and of SWP NC, 1939-40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940; left Shachtmanites around 1954.

Gourget, Pierre (b. 1904) Pseudonym of David Barozine. Founding member of French CP; member of executive committee of CGTU woodworkers union; expelled from CP, 1925; secretary of Souvarine's group, 1927; supporter of Paz' *Contre le courant*, 1928; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929, and of Ligue Communiste, 1930; member of Ligue executive committee, 1930-31; signed manifesto of Opposition Unitaire and was elected to its secretariat,

1930; resigned from Ligue in opposition to Trotsky on trade-union question and founded Gauche Communiste, 1931, but soon returned to Ligue; rejoined CP, 1932.

Gourov Pseudonym of Leon Trotsky.

Grylewicz, Anton (1885–1971) Joined youth movement of German Social Democracy (SPD), 1905; joined Kautsky's USPD, 1917; was a leading Revolutionary Shop Steward in November 1918 Revolution; part of USPD left wing that fused with German CP, 1920; leader of Berlin district "left" headed by Fischer-Maslow; one of hundreds expelled for supporting Russian United Opposition, 1927; founding member of Leninbund and leader of its Trotskyist minority until his expulsion, February 1930; a founder and leader of German ILO section, 1930–33; editor of ILO paper *Permanente Revolution*, 1931–33; responsible for publishing Trotsky's writings in German; in exile in Czechoslovakia, 1933–37, and in France, 1937–40, where he broke with Trotskyism; emigrated to Cuba, 1941–55; returned to West Germany, 1955, and joined SPD.

Howat, Alexander (1876–1945) Head of UMW District 14 (Kansas), expelled by Lewis, 1921, but reinstated later in the decade; member of ILD NC, 1925–28; president of insurgent Reorganized UMW, 1930; expelled from UMW, 1930.

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Founded in 1905 as revolutionary-syndicalist industrial union movement with participation of SLP; SLP withdrew, 1908; declined in aftermath of WWI and Russian Revolution as some IWW militants joined CP.

International Labor Defense (ILD) Created by CP, 1925, to organize united-front defense for class-war prisoners regardless of political affiliation; led by Cannon, 1925–28; dissolved into Civil Rights Congress, 1946.

International Left Opposition (ILO) International organization of Trotskyists, 1929–33; changed name to International Communist League, August 1933, when Trotskyists ceased to function as expelled faction of CI and embarked on struggle to form new revolutionary workers parties and new international.

Jewish Group Group of workers and trade-union leaders from Jewish section of French CP who supported *La Vérité* and joined

Ligue Communiste in 1930; published Yiddish journal, *Die Klorkeit*; initially supported Molinier on trade-union question; led by Mill and Felix, broke with Molinier, late 1931, sought collaboration with Rosmer, and withdrew from Ligue executive committee; most remained in Ligue after Felix split to join Gauche Communiste in 1932; majority split from ILO in opposition to Trotsky's 1933 call for new party and international; with Felix, remnants of Gauche Communiste and other dissidents formed Union Communiste that opposed defense of USSR, 1933-39.

Judd, Helen Member of Chicago CP and Cannon faction supporter expelled in 1928; schoolteacher; founding member of CLA.

Kaldis, Aristodimos (1899-1979) Greek supporter of CLA; waiter active in Amalgamated Food Workers organizing drive in New York, 1933-34; expelled with B.J. Field for indiscipline during hotel workers strike, 1934; left politics and became artist.

Kamenev, Lev B. (1883-1936) Bolshevik from 1903; Central Committee member from 1917; head of Moscow party organization; allied with Zinoviev and Stalin in "troika" against Trotsky, 1923-25; with Zinoviev allied with Trotsky in United Opposition, 1926-27; capitulated to Stalin; executed after first Moscow Trial in 1936.

Karsner, Rose (1890-1968) Born Rose Greenberg in Rumania; emigrated to U.S. as a child; joined SP, 1908; secretary of Max Eastman's journal *Masses* during WWI; founding American Communist; worked for Friends of Soviet Russia and Workers International Relief; her first husband, David Karsner, wrote authorized biography of Debs; Cannon's companion from 1924; assistant secretary of ILD; founding member of CLA; business manager of *Militant*, 1930; founding member of WPUS, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP; possessed sharp political edge; active in Trotskyist movement until her death.

Kautsky, Karl (1854-1938) Leader of German Social Democracy (SPD) and best-known theoretician of Socialist (Second) International in two decades before WWI; social-pacifist during WWI; split from SPD to found centrist Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), 1917; opposed Bolshevik Revolution; reunited with SPD in 1922.

Keck, William Founding secretary of Progressive Miners of America and member of SP.

Der Kommunist Newspaper of United German Opposition, published sporadically from April 1930 to July 1931, when it became organ of Landau-led split; ceased publication in 1933.

Konikow, Antoinette (1869–1946) Joined Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labor Group in Switzerland, 1888; emigrated to U.S., 1893; learned Yiddish to work among Jewish unemployed workers; a founder of Workmen's Circle; member of SLP, 1893–1897; member of SP, 1901–19; medical doctor and pioneer of birth control; toured U.S. speaking against WWI for SP German Federation, 1917; founding American Communist; went to Soviet Union as birth control specialist and was won to Left Opposition, 1926; formed Independent Communist League, a Trotskyist group in Boston, 1928; founding member of CLA; founding member of WPUS, 1934–36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP; frequent *Militant* columnist on woman question; honorary member of SWP NC at time of death.

Korsch, Karl (1886–1961) Joined Fabian Society as student in Britain, 1912; drafted into German army during WWI and demoted for opposition to war, 1914; member of Kautsky's USPD, 1917–20; opposed CI's 21 Conditions but joined CP, 1920; published *Marxism and Philosophy*, 1923; Minister of Justice in coalition government in Thuringia, fall 1923; edited CP theoretical organ *Die Internationale*, 1924–25; deputy in Reichstag, 1924–28; delegate to CI Fifth Congress, 1924; opposed Soviet-German commercial treaty and was expelled from CP, 1926; argued that counterrevolution had already triumphed in USSR; published ultraleft *Kommunistische Politik*, 1926–28; dropped out of political activity, 1928; fled Germany, 1933; emigrated to U.S., 1936, and became philosophy professor.

Krehm, William Journalist and member of CLA Toronto branch who opposed main theses of CLA Second National Conference, 1931; led group in Toronto branch opposed to Spector's leadership, 1932–33; split from CLA in support of Field, 1934; leader of Field group in Canada, 1934–37.

Lacroix, Henri (1901-1939) Pseudonym of Francisco Garcia Lavid. Founding Spanish Communist; lived in USSR, 1925-27; joined Russian Left Opposition, 1927; a founding leader of OCE in exile in Belgium, 1930; arrested several times upon return to Spain, 1930-31; OCE general secretary, 1931-32; resigned post, March 1932, and began battle against Nin on unclear political basis; expelled from OCE for misuse of funds, June 1933; attempted to rejoin CP; joined SP, September 1933; led division in Republican army during Civil War; murdered by Stalinists as he tried to reach exile in France.

Lafargue, Paul (1841-1911) Prominent leader and propagandist of French and international working-class movement; a follower of Proudhon, he was won to Marxism as member of First International; member of General Council of First International; married Marx's daughter Laura, 1868, collaborated politically with her until their joint suicide, 1911; participant in Paris Commune, 1871; helped establish First International sections in Spain and Portugal, 1871-72; founder of French Workers' Party, 1879.

Landau, Kurt (1903-1937) Joined Austrian CP in 1921; became leader, with Frey, of faction supporting Russian United Opposition, 1926; expelled, late 1926; cofounder with Frey of Communist Party of Austria (Opposition); expelled by Frey, April 1928; founded Communist Opposition of Austria (Left Communists), known as Mahnruf Group; moved to Berlin, 1929; a founder of German United Opposition, March 1930; a leader of German ILO section, 1930 to July 1931, when he left after struggle against his destructive cliquism; leader of Marxist-Internationalists, published *Der Funke (Spark)*, 1931-February 1934; exiled in Paris, March 1933-36; coordinator of foreign supporters for POUM in Barcelona, 1936-37; abducted and murdered by Stalinist agents, September 1937.

Lassalle, Ferdinand (1825-1864) Participant in revolutionary upsurge, 1848; associate of Marx; leading agitator for working class in German political revival of early 1860s; founding president of General German Workers Union, 1863; opposed struggle for higher wages and advocated producers cooperatives and universal suffrage to achieve socialism; opposition to bourgeois liberals led him into secret negotiations with Bismarck at end of his life.

Marx and Engels never publicly broke with Lassalle while he was alive, but criticized his views in *Critique of the Gotha Program* when Lassalle's followers united in 1875 with Marxists to form the party that became the German Social Democrats (SPD).

Leninbund Party founded in April 1928 by heterogeneous, mostly pro-Zinoviev "lefts" expelled from German CP, 1926–27; led by Urbahns after Fischer and Maslow resigned, May 1928, to seek readmission to CP; published *Die Fahne des Kommunismus* (*Flag of Communism*); sought affiliation with ILO, but differences arose when Leninbund ran electoral slate against CP; broke with ILO after Urbahns refused to defend USSR in Chinese Eastern Railroad dispute, 1929; Trotsky's supporters were expelled, early 1930; fell apart after Hitler's ascension to power.

Leonetti, Alfonso (Souzo) (1895–1984) Joined SP youth, 1913; founding member of Italian CP, 1921; editor of *L'Ordine nuovo*, 1921–22; delegate to CI Fifth Congress, 1924; elected to CP central committee, 1926; worked clandestinely in fascist Italy until 1927; directed Italian CP antifascist work in exile from France; opposed Third Period turn and with Tresso and Paulo Ravazzoli was expelled from CP for Trotskyism and formed New Italian Opposition (NOI), 1930; part of NOI majority that sided with Naville against Molinier on trade-union question; member of International Secretariat of Trotskyist movement, 1930–31 and 1933–36; opposed entry of Trotskyists into SP; argued for support to Stalinist Popular Front, 1935; left Trotskyist movement, 1936; participated in French Resistance during WWII; admitted to French CP, 1944 or 1945, but membership annulled on insistence of Italian CP; formally readmitted to Italian CP, 1962.

Lewis, John L. (1880–1969) Despotic leader of United Mine Workers, 1920–60; principal leader of CIO, 1935–40.

Lewit, Morris (Morris Stein) (1903–1998) Participant as youth in Russian Revolution; emigrated to U.S., 1920; met lifelong companion, Sylvia Bleeker, on ship; founding member of CP youth, 1922; supporter of CP Foster faction; won to Trotskyism, expelled from CP, and joined CLA, 1930; editor of *Unser Kampf*, 1932–33; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931–33 fight; went over to collaboration with Cannon in 1934; founding member of WPUS and on NC,

1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938 through early 1960s; SWP acting national secretary during imprisonment of SWP leaders under Smith Act, 1943-45; in Europe with Bleeker as member of IEC, 1947-48; withdrew from active party leadership in early 1960s.

Liebknecht, Karl (1871-1919) Son of Wilhelm Liebknecht; co-founder of Socialist Youth International, 1907; imprisoned for *Militarism and Anti-Militarism*, 1907-08; deputy to Reichstag, 1912-16; first member of Reichstag fraction of Social Democracy (SPD) to vote against war credits, 1914; coleader with Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches of Spartakus antiwar tendency in SPD during WWI; imprisoned for antiwar activities, 1916-18; led Spartakus as part of Kautsky's USPD, 1917-18; founder of German CP, December 1918; arrested and murdered on order of SPD government, 15 January 1919.

Liebknecht, Wilhelm (1826-1900) Participant in 1848-49 German Revolution; emigrated to London and joined Communist League, 1850, beginning lifelong friendship with Marx and Engels; returned to Germany, 1862; founding member of First International, 1864; founding leader of German Social Democracy, 1869; deputy to Reichstag, 1867-70 and 1874-1900; imprisoned for opposition to Franco-Prussian War, 1872.

Ligue Communiste de France French section of International Left Opposition, founded in 1930; dissolved in 1934 when majority entered French SP to win over its leftward-moving members.

London Bureau International federation of centrist parties that took shape in May 1932 as International Labor Community; British Independent Labor Party and German SAP were founding elements; renamed International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity in 1935; POUM joined after its break with Trotsky; merged forces with remnants of International Right Opposition in April 1939; dissolved after Nazi invasion of France.

Lore, Ludwig (1875-1942) German Social Democrat; emigrated to U.S., 1903; member of IWW and SP left wing during WWI; editor of *New Yorker Volkszeitung* and leader of German federation; found-

ing American Communist and member of central committee, 1921–24; expelled from CP for defending Trotsky, 1925; member of Muste's CPLA/AWP, opposed unity with CLA; founding member of WPUS, 1934–35; expelled for social-chauvinist articles in *New York Post*.

Lovestone, Jay (1898–1990) Joined SP as student at City College of New York, 1917; founding American Communist and member of central committee, 1919–29; Ruthenberg's chief factional lieutenant, 1923–27; after Ruthenberg's death, secretary of CP, 1927–29; expelled from CP, 1929; founding leader of Communist Party Opposition, later renamed Independent Labor League, American section of Right Opposition; disbanded organization, 1940; became anti-Communist AFL-CIO adviser, leading cold warrior, and CIA collaborator.

La Lutte des classes (Class Struggle) Journal founded by P. Naville in solidarity with Russian United Opposition, 1928; became theoretical journal of French Trotskyists after launching of *La Vérité*, 1929; Trotsky broke with it over publication of article by Landau, 1931; became organ of Naville group when it split from Trotskyists in opposition to entry into French SP, 1934–35.

Luxemburg, Rosa (1870–1919) Born of Jewish family in Poland; founding member of Polish SP, 1892; with lifelong collaborator, Leo Jogiches, split SP in 1894 to found group later known as Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, which opposed Polish national self-determination; joined German Social Democracy (SPD), 1897; became SPD leader, known for opposition to Bernstein's revisionism; participated in 1905 revolution in Russian Poland; with Karl Liebknecht, led Spartakus antiwar left in SPD in WWI; imprisoned for antiwar activity, 1915–18; led Spartakus as part of Kautsky's USPD, 1917–18; founder of German CP, December 1918; assassinated on order of SPD government, 15 January 1919.

MacDonald, Jack (1888–1941) Leader of 1919 Toronto metalworkers strike and Ontario labor leader; cofounder with Spector of Canadian Communist Party, 1921; represented Canadian CP at CI Fourth Congress, 1922; although he acquiesced when Spector was purged for Trotskyism in 1928, he was expelled in 1931;

declared for ILO and joined CLA Toronto branch, 1932; retired from active political work, 1936, but remained committed to Marxism until his death.

Mahnruf Group Founded by Landau after his expulsion from Frey's Communist Party of Austria (Opposition) in April 1928; published *Der Neue Mahnruf* (*The New Call*) sporadically, 1928-31; sought affiliation as Austrian ILO section, but was never recognized.

Malkin, Maurice Founding American Communist and leader of Furriers Union in New York; expelled as Trotskyist, 1928; imprisoned for role in furriers strike, 1929-30; repudiated CLA in October 1929 when Stalinist ILD threatened to withdraw from his defense, but retracted his statement; expelled from CLA and rejoined CP, 1931; expelled from CP, 1937; anti-Communist witness before Congressional Dies Committee, 1939.

Markin, N. Pseudonym of Leon Sedov.

Maslow, Arkadi (1891-1941) Joined German CP, 1919; leader of Berlin left wing; promoted to coleadership of party with Fischer after removal of Brandler, 1924; expelled from German CP for support to Russian United Opposition, 1926; participated in founding conference of Leninbund, April 1928, but left organization a month later and sought readmission to CP, as a consequence of Zinoviev's capitulation to Stalin; in exile in Paris after Hitler's victory, he joined Trotskyists, 1934-37; died in Cuba attempting to get refuge in U.S.

Maurín, Joaquín (1896-1973) Teacher and regional leader of anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labor (CNT) in Lérida, Spain, 1919-21; part of CNT delegation to founding conference of RILU, 1921; led dissident CNT members and others in founding Catalan federation of Spanish CP, 1921; elected to central committee, 1923; attended CI Fifth Congress, 1924; arrested and jailed, 1925-27; in exile in France, 1928-31; led Catalan Federation in break with CP, 1930; fused with other CP dissidents to found Workers and Peasants Bloc (BOC), affiliated with Bukharin-Brandler Right Opposition, 1931; led BOC in fusion with OCE to form POUM, 1935; secretary general of POUM, 1935-36; elected to Spanish parliament, 1936; arrested by Franco forces, July 1936;

released in 1947 and lived thereafter in New York City, where he argued POUM should have entered national Republican government during Civil War.

Mill, M. (1905–1937?) Pseudonym of Pavel Okun. Ukrainian immigrant in Palestine and France, where he joined CP in 1920s; a leader of Jewish Group, which supported *La Vérité* and adhered to Ligue, 1930; fluent in Russian, he was appointed administrative secretary of ILO after a meeting in Prinkipo, October 1930; as secretary he was source of political confusion, upholding Nin's fusion course with Spanish Right Opposition and leading Jewish Group into rapprochement with Rosmer; removed from post, late 1931; defected to Stalinists, 1932.

Molinier, Henri (1898–1944) Became Communist under influence of brother Raymond; met Trotsky in Prinkipo and helped publish Russian-language *Bulletin of the Opposition*, 1929; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929, and Ligue Communiste, 1930; owner of debt collection agency that helped finance Ligue; represented Trotsky's literary interests in France, 1930–35; organized Trotsky's living arrangements in France, 1933–35; entered French SP with Trotskyists, 1934; expelled from Trotskyist movement with brother for publishing own paper, 1935; rejoined Trotskyists before splitting again, 1936; member of centrist Molinier group, which opposed French Trotskyists, 1936–39; from 1935 argued that USSR had become "state capitalist"; leader of ex-Molinier group in France during WWII; founding member of reunified French Trotskyist organization, 1944; killed during attempted uprising when Nazis fled Paris, 1944.

Molinier, Raymond (1904–1994) Joined French CP youth, 1922, and CP, 1923; expelled, 1924, and reinstated, 1928, as member of editorial board of Souvarine's *Bulletin Communiste*; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929; expelled from French CP and founding member of Ligue Communiste, 1930; led fight in Ligue against trade-union opportunism of Opposition Unitaire; member of Ligue executive committee from 1931; dogged by rumors about activities for brother's debt collection agency; requested to stop his commercial activities by ILO plenum, August 1933; leader of Trotskyists during entry into French SP, 1934–35; expelled from Trotskyist movement with brother for publishing own paper, *La Commune*, 1935; rejoined Trotskyists before splitting again, 1936; led centrist

group opposed to French Trotskyists, 1936-39; condemned to prison for antiwar activity and fled France for London, 1940; left for Argentina, 1941; active supporter of ostensible Trotskyists; returned to France and joined French Pabloist organization, 1977.

Mooney, Thomas J. (1882-1942) SP member from 1907; International Molders' Union activist, elected to San Francisco Labor Council, 1912; framed up on charges of bombing SF "Preparedness Day" parade in 1916 and sentenced to death; execution stayed in 1918 due to international campaign; pardoned in 1939.

Morgenstern, Bernard (1907-1981) Joined CP youth, 1925, and CP, 1926; active in garment workers struggles in Philadelphia; member of Philadelphia district committee of CP youth when he was expelled for protesting Cannon's expulsion, 1928; founding member of CLA and alternate on NC, 1929-32; Cannon supporter in CLA fight; spent 90 days in jail on "sedition" charges, 1932; resigned from NC after Shachtman made issue of his marriage by a rabbi, December 1932; founding member of WPUS, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; delegate to founding SWP conference; dropped out of party soon after.

Muste, Abraham Johannes (1885-1967) Ordained as minister in Reformed Church, 1909; pacifist in WWI, became national committeeman of ACLU; leader of textile worker strikes in Paterson, New Jersey and Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1919; became director of Brookwood Labor College, 1921; founder and principal leader of CPLA/AWP, 1929-34; founding member of WPUS, on NC, and national secretary, 1934-36; opposed entry of Trotskyists into SP, 1936, and returned to religion and pacifist activism; executive director of pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1940s and 1950s; established American Forum for Socialist Education, late 1950s, attempting to broker regroupment among socialists; active opponent of U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam at time of death.

National Miners Union (NMU) Third Period "revolutionary" union founded by CP, September 1928, in opposition to Lewis' United Mine Workers; led strikes in Illinois coalfields, 1929; Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, 1931; and Kentucky, 1931-32; dissolved in 1933.

Naville, Pierre (1904-1993) Codirector of *La Révolution surréaliste* from 1924; joined French CP youth and CP, 1926; secretary of CP

student movement and editor of its paper; codirector of CP educational journal, *Clarté*, 1926–27; delegate to tenth anniversary celebration of Russian Revolution, where he met Trotsky and attended meetings of Left Opposition, 1927; expelled from CP, 1928; transformed *Clarté* into pro-*Opposition* journal, *La Lutte des classes*, 1928; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929, and *Ligue Communiste*, 1930; alternate member of ILO International Bureau, 1930; initially supported Rosmer and Gourget against Trotsky on trade-union question; consistent opponent of R. Molinier in *Ligue*; expelled from ILO for opposing entry into French SP, 1934; subsequently joined SP with his own group and reunited with Trotskyists; expelled from SP, 1935; a leader of French ILO section, 1936–39; delegate to founding conference of Fourth International and elected to executive committee, 1938; broke with Trotskyists, 1939, in opposition to entry into Pivert's centrist organization; active in left social-democratic organizations post-WWII; known for his historical and sociological works.

Neurath, Alois (1886–1952) A founder of German section of Czechoslovakian CP; secretary of central committee, 1921–26; CP deputy in Czechoslovakian parliament; member of ECCI, 1922–26; delegate to CI Fourth and Fifth Congresses, 1922 and 1924; supporter of Zinoviev; expelled from Czech CP and joined Bukharinite Right Opposition, 1929; broke with Right Opposition, 1932; joined Trotskyists with supporters in 1937.

New Italian Opposition (Nuova Opposizione Italiana, NOI) Group formed inside Italian CP in exile to oppose CI's Third Period turn; its leading members, Tresso, Leonetti, and Paolo Ravazzoli, were expelled from CP, June 1930; functioned as Italian section of ILO and published *Bollettino dell'Opposizione Comunista Italiana*; individual members joined French *Ligue*; NOI majority around Leonetti and Ravazzoli sided with Naville on trade-union question; Tresso sided with Molinier and was expelled from NOI, April 1933; expulsions annulled by ILO plenum, May 1933; NOI disintegrated and *Bollettino* ceased publication, June 1933; Ravazzoli and supporters opposed call for Fourth International and broke with ILO; Italian Trotskyist organization was reconstituted with Tresso, Leonetti, and new infusion of oppositionists from CP, early 1934.

Nin, Andrés (1892-1937) Joined Spanish SP, 1911; traveled in Europe and North Africa, 1915-17; joined anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labor (CNT), 1917; secretary general of CNT, 1920-21; attended RILU founding conference, 1921; member of RILU executive bureau, 1921-26; joined Russian CP, 1923; supporter of United Opposition, 1926-27; expelled from CP, 1927; expelled from USSR, 1930; joined Spanish Left Opposition, 1930; general secretary, 1932-35; a founder and leader of POUM, 1935-37; broke with Trotsky and became minister of justice in Catalan government, September-December 1937; arrested and murdered by Stalinists, 1937.

Oehler, Hugo (1903-1983) CP district organizer in Kansas City, 1920s; supporter of CP Cannon faction; won to views of Left Opposition following Cannon's expulsion; remained undercover in CP for a year; helped lead CP work in 1929 Gastonia, North Carolina textile strike; joined CLA, June 1930; member of NC, 1931-34; supporter of Cannon in 1931-33 fight; in 1934 began ultraleftist opposition, attempting to obstruct fusion with AWP and opposing entry into SP; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934-35; expelled, October 1935; founding leader of Revolutionary Workers League, 1935-41; went to Spain and was active in Barcelona uprising, May 1937; arrested and held by Republican government for 41 days; ceased to be RWL leader when he moved to Denver, 1941, and Sidney Lens (Sid Okun) took over as acting national secretary; RWL disappeared in 1950s.

O'Flaherty, Tom (1889-1936) Emigrated to U.S. from Ireland in 1912 and joined SP soon after; founding American Communist and member of central executive committee, 1921-22 and 1925-27; prominent journalist at *Daily Worker* and *Labor Defender*; supporter of CP Cannon faction; expelled as Trotskyist, 1928; founding CLA member; left CLA over support to Plentywood "Farmer-Labor Party," 1930; returned to Ireland.

Opposición Comunista de España (OCE, Communist Opposition of Spain) Spanish ILO section founded in exile in Belgium, February 1930; changed name to Izquierda Comunista de España (ICE, Communist Left of Spain), March 1932, reflecting differences with ILO; fused with Maurín's Workers and Peasants Bloc to found

POUM, September 1935; POUM broke with Trotsky and entered Spanish Popular Front, January 1936.

Opposition Unitaire Initiated by Ligue Communiste within CP-led Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire, April 1930; was a bloc with rightward-moving leadership of teachers federation that had been recently expelled from CP; program condemned by Trotsky as catering to opportunist and syndicalist prejudices against Stalinist CGTU leadership.

Overstraeten, Eduard Van (War) (1891–1981) Led current in SP youth in Belgium sympathetic to Russian Revolution at end of WWI; founding Communist in Belgium; delegate to CI Second Congress, 1920, and Third Congress, 1921, where elected to executive committee; when Belgian Communists united, he became national secretary, 1921–28; imprisoned for opposing French occupation of Ruhr, 1923; deputy in parliament, 1925–28; led current sympathetic to Trotsky from 1925; expelled with substantial minority for supporting Russian United Opposition, March 1928; founding leader of Belgian Left Opposition; broke with ILO, refusing to defend USSR in Chinese Eastern Railroad dispute and arguing for founding new parties, 1930; abandoned politics and became successful painter.

Pappas, Sebastian Activist in CP Food Workers Industrial Union; expelled from CP for supporting Trotsky's opposition to Third Period tactics in Germany, August 1932; joined CLA, October 1932.

Paz, Maurice (1896–1985) Joined French SP, 1919; founding member of French CP, 1920; principal CP lawyer; published pro-Trotskyist *Contre le courant* and expelled from CP, 1927; broke with ILO when Trotsky condemned his diletantism, 1929; returned to SP, 1931; member of pacifist tendency that supported Pétain, July 1940; ceased all political activity during WWII; rejoined SP after WWII; broke with Socialists in 1972.

Pearcy, Claud Miner from Gillespie, Illinois; elected president of Progressive Miners of America at founding convention, September 1932.

Pepper, John (1886–1938) Pseudonym of József Pogány. Member of SP in Budapest; helped lead failed Hungarian Revolution of 1919;

fled to Moscow; sent to U.S., 1922; led American CP's orientation to "Farmer-Labor" movement in alliance with Ruthenberg faction, 1923-24; recalled to Moscow, 1924; returned to U.S., 1928-29; oversaw expulsions of U.S. Trotskyists; recalled to Moscow and removed from CI posts, 1929; arrested during purges and executed.

Petras Former member of New York CP district Greek bureau, expelled from CP Spartacus Workers Club for Trotskyism, November 1931; joined CLA; active in Food Workers Industrial Union until expelled by Stalinists.

Pilsudski, Josef (1867-1935) Founded Polish SP, 1892; led right-nationalist faction, 1906-18; led Polish legions under Austrian command against Russia in WWI; headed Polish Republic, 1918-23; directed expansionist war against Soviet workers state, 1920; annexed large area of Byelorussia through Riga Treaty with USSR, 1921; led coup to establish military dictatorship in Poland, 1926; leader of Polish state until his death.

POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, Workers Party of Marxist Unification) Centrist party formed in September 1935 by fusion of Spanish Trotskyists with Spanish section of Right Opposition; joined Popular Front electoral pact and Catalan Republican government, 1936; its treachery helped derail possible proletarian revolution during Spanish Civil War.

Profintern Russian shorthand for Red International of Labor Unions.

Progressive Miners of America (PMA) Union founded in September 1932 in southern Illinois as breakaway from Lewis' UMW; opposed \$5-a-day wage scale negotiated by Lewis, but signed own contracts for \$5 a day; initially included SP, CPLA, and CLA supporters; dominated by UMW bureaucrats by spring/summer 1933, when left-wingers were expelled; chartered by AFL in 1938 in retaliation for Lewis' formation of CIO.

Prometeo Group Organization in exile of supporters of Bordiga's Left Faction of Italian CP; publishers of journal *Prometeo*; loosely affiliated with ILO in 1930, but *Prometeo*'s opposition to struggle for democratic demands and the united-front tactic led to a break, formalized at ILO International Preconference in February 1933.

Rakovsky, Christian (1873–1941) Socialist from early 1890s; leader of Balkan Revolutionary Social Democratic Federation, pre-WWI; collaborator of Trotsky; internationalist during WWI and delegate to Zimmerwald antiwar conference, 1915; imprisoned for revolutionary opposition to WWI and freed by Russian troops, 1917; joined Bolshevik Party, December 1917; Bolshevik Central Committee member, 1919–27; delegate to CI First, Second, and Third Congresses, 1919, 1920, and 1921; head of Ukrainian Soviet government, 1919–23; a founding leader of Left Opposition, 1923; Soviet ambassador to Britain, 1923, and France, 1925; expelled from Russian CP and exiled to Siberia, 1927; recanted, 1934, and rejoined CP, 1935; expelled again in Stalin's purges; convicted and sentenced to 20 years in third Moscow Trial, 1938; shot on Stalin's orders, 1941.

Ray, George CLA member elected to National Youth Committee at CLA second convention, September 1932; on editorial board of *Young Spartacus* through at least October 1932; left organization in 1933.

Red International of Labor Unions (RILU, Profintern) Federation of trade unions associated with Communist International; formed in Moscow in 1921.

Reorganized United Mine Workers Southern Illinois breakaway from Lewis' UMW formed in 1930; led by Harry Fishwick, former leader of UMW District 12; "progressive" unionists John Brophy and Howat also participated; returned to UMW, March 1931.

Rosenthal, Gérard (Francis Gérard) (1903–1992) Worked with Naville on *La Révolution surréaliste*; joined CP as supporter of Left Opposition, 1927; as delegate to tenth anniversary celebration of Russian Revolution, met Trotsky, 1927; helped transform *Clarté* into pro-Opposition journal, *La Lutte des classes*, 1928; cosecretary of Souvarine's group; expelled from CP, 1928; founding member of *La Vérité*, 1929, and Ligue Communiste, 1930; elected to Ligue executive committee, 1930; Trotsky's lawyer from 1931; a leader of Trotskyists during entry into French SP, 1934–35; expelled from SP, 1935; on central committee of French Trotskyist organization, 1936–39; broke with Trotskyists over entry into Pivert's centrist organization, 1939; member of Resistance during WWII; rejoined

SP, 1945; remained active in social-democratic, antifascist, and antiracist organizations.

Rosmer, Alfred (1877-1964) A leading anarcho-syndicalist in pre-WWI France; editor of CGT paper *La Bataille syndicaliste*; internationalist opponent of WWI; worked with Trotsky in Paris; supported Bolshevik Revolution, 1917; founding member of Committee to Join the Third International, 1919; delegate at CI Second Congress and member of presidium, 1920; member of ECCI in Moscow, 1920-21; a founder of RILU, 1921; returned to Paris, 1921; delegate at CI Fourth Congress, 1922, and Fifth Congress, 1924; member of French CP central committee, 1923-24; editor of CP journal, *L'Humanité*, 1924; an early supporter of Trotsky, was expelled from CP, December 1924; helped launch syndicalist-communist *La Révolution prolétarienne*, 1925; founding editor of *La Vérité*, 1929, and of Ligue Communiste, 1930; member of Ligue executive committee and of ILO International Bureau; resigned from Ligue over debate on Opposition Unitaire, 1930; collaborated with Gauche Communiste, 1931-32; resumed personal relations with Trotsky, 1936; active in support of Dewey Commission of Inquiry into Moscow Trials, 1937; returned Trotsky's grandson to Coyoacán, 1939; spent most of WWII in U.S.; published Trotsky's books in France; supported Algerian independence; author of *Moscow Under Lenin* (1949) and book on French workers movement during WWI.

Ruthenberg, Charles Emil (1882-1927) Joined SP, 1909; leader of pro-Russian SP left wing and founding American Communist; imprisoned for sedition, 1920-22; national secretary of CP, 1922-27; leader of faction bearing his name and allied with Pepper and Lovestone from 1923; died suddenly in March 1927 and was buried in Kremlin.

Ryazanov, David (1870-1938) Pseudonym of David Goldendach. Joined Russian populists, 1885; imprisoned for five years; won to Marxism after release, organizer for Russian Social Democrats from early 1890s; imprisoned again, 1891-92; sided with Menshevik faction in 1903 split; active in trade unions in 1905 Revolution; in exile in Western Europe, began research on Marx and Engels, from 1907; returned to Russia and joined Trotsky's organization that fused with Bolsheviks, 1917; delegate to CI Second Congress, 1920; named director of Marx-Engels Institute,

1921; organized acquisition and publication of archival resources, including extensively annotated *Communist Manifesto* (1922) and first publication of several Marxist classics; purged from CP and exiled to Saratov, 1931; killed in purges.

Satir, Norman Member of Chicago CLA; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931–33 fight; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; member of Abern-Weber clique; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940.

Saul, George CP organizer and ILD secretary in Colorado, 1928; organizer for National Textile Workers Union in South; indicted for work in 1929 Gastonia, North Carolina strike; joined CLA, 1930; took independent position in CLA faction fight, 1931–33; active in CLA Detroit branch; expelled with Hugo Oehler, 1935.

Scottsboro Case A major civil rights battle of the 1930s; nine young black men falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931; eight of nine sentenced to death in first trial; ILD made case defining one in struggle for black rights in 1930s; after a series of trials, Scottsboro Defense Committee accepted a plea bargain in 1937; four defendants were released, remaining five served lengthy prison sentences; last defendant not released until 1950.

Second International Also known as Socialist International. International organization of social-democratic parties formed in 1889; after leaderships of various national parties supported capitalist war aims in August 1914, Lenin called for new, third international, formed in Moscow as Communist International, 1919. Second International still exists as a federation of social-democratic and populist bourgeois parties.

Sedov, Leon (1906–1938) Older son of Leon Trotsky and Natalya Sedova; joined Russian Communist youth in 1917 by falsifying his age; member of Russian Left Opposition, 1923–28; went into exile with parents, acting as Trotsky's chief of staff, 1928–31; editor of Russian-language *Bulletin of the Opposition*, 1929–38; elected to ILO International Secretariat, April 1930, but unable to get visa for France; moved to Berlin, February 1931, and joined German section; member of I.S., 1932–37; moved to Paris, April 1933; accused with father in first two Moscow Trials, 1936–37; wrote *Red Book*

on the Moscow Trials, 1936; died after operation for appendicitis, probably murdered by Stalinist agents.

Seipold, Oskar (1889-1966) Joined German Social Democracy (SPD), 1909; a Russian citizen, served in tsarist army in WWI, was captured by Germans, and became prisoner of war; remaining in Germany, joined Kautsky's USPD, 1919; part of USPD left wing that fused with CP, 1920; after aborted German Revolution, imprisoned, 1923-27; head of CP antifascist military organization in East Prussia, 1927-29; took CP seat in Prussian Landtag (parliament) after Ernst Meyer's death, 1930; expelled from CP for pro-Trotskyist views, February 1930, but remained in Landtag until 1932, delivering a speech written by Trotsky in 1931; a founder and member of German United Opposition, 1930-33; member of central committee, 1931-33; imprisoned by Nazis, March-December 1933; fled Germany and lived illegally in Poland, 1935-45; politically inactive after WWII.

Senin, Adolf (1903-?) Pseudonym of A. Sobolevicius. Stalinist agent active in German section of ILO, 1930-31; brother of Roman Well (R. Sobolevicius), also a Stalinist agent; leader of Leipzig branch; "defected" to Moscow, leading pro-Stalinist split in German section, late 1932; emigrated to U.S. during WWII and, under name Jack Soble, led spy ring that infiltrated SWP; arrested, tried, and convicted of espionage by U.S. government, 1957.

Shachtman, Max (1904-1972) Joined CP, 1921, as member of Workers Council; leader of CP youth, 1923-27; editor of *ILD Labor Defender*, 1925-28; alternate member of central committee, 1927-28; supporter of CP Cannon faction; expelled for Trotskyism in 1928; founding member of CLA and on NC, 1929-34; editor of U.S. Trotskyist publications, including *Militant* and *New International*; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding SWP member and on NC, 1938-40; split from Trotskyist movement, 1940, in opposition to Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of Soviet Union; founding leader of Workers Party and its 1949 successor, Independent Socialist League; led liquidation of ISL into SP-SDF, 1958; remained leader of SP, and became social patriot and supporter of Democratic Party.

Shliapnikov, Aleksandr Gavrilovich (1885-1937) Russian metalworker, joined Russian Social Democrats, 1901; Bolshevik from

1903; imprisoned, 1905–07; emigrated to France, 1908–14; chief organizer of Bolshevik Party within Russia, 1914–17; chairman of Petrograd metalworkers union, 1917; party representative to Petrograd Soviet, 1917; People's Commissar of Labor, 1917; member of Bolshevik Central Committee, 1918–22; delegate to CI Second Congress, 1920; leader of Workers Opposition faction, 1920–22; diplomatic post in Paris, 1924; early supporter of United Opposition, but capitulated to Stalin, November 1926; expelled from party, 1933; arrested and shot.

Sifakis, James Greek-born steelworker and activist in Pittsburgh CP in 1920s; blacklisted for union activism; dropped out of CP two months before expulsion of Trotskyists; joined CLA in 1929; mainstay of Pittsburgh CLA branch.

Skoglund, Carl (1884–1960) Joined Swedish SP youth, 1905; blacklisted for union activity, emigrated to U.S., 1911; joined Scandinavian Federation of SP, 1914, and became Minnesota chairman, 1917; joined IWW, 1917; organized local of Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, 1917; founding American Communist; blacklisted as leader of 1922–23 rail strike; CP industrial organizer in Minnesota and member of Minneapolis district committee for most of decade; generally supported Cannon faction; expelled from CP, 1928; founding member of CLA and on NC, 1929–34; leader of Minneapolis Teamster strikes, 1934; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; entered SP with Trotskyists, founding member of SWP and on NC from 1938; elected to executive committee of Fourth International, 1938; president of Teamsters Local 544, 1938–40; prosecuted under Smith Act and jailed, 1944; threatened with deportation by U.S. government for rest of life.

Sneevliet, Henricus (1883–1942) Joined Dutch SP, 1902; emigrated to Dutch East Indies, 1913, where he founded Social Democratic Union, 1914, that later became Indonesian CP; deported from Java, 1918; joined Dutch CP, 1919; delegate to CI Second Congress and elected to ECCI, 1920; CI representative in China and Far East, 1921–23; advocated Chinese CP entry into nationalist Guomindang; returned to Dutch CP, 1924; left CP in sympathy with Russian United Opposition, 1927; founded Revolutionary Socialist Party, 1929, that joined ILO in 1933 after turn to building new parties and Fourth International; merged with another

Trotskyist group to found Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, 1935, maintaining membership in London Bureau as well as international Trotskyist movement; differences over trade-union work and Spanish Civil War led to break with Trotskyist movement, 1938; deputy in Dutch parliament, 1933-39; arrested under Nazi occupation, charged with maintaining banned political organization and publishing literature hostile to Germany; convicted and shot.

Socialist Labor Party (SLP) American socialist party founded in 1877 and led by Daniel De Leon from early 1890s; influenced by Ferdinand Lassalle. It came to emphasize passive, legalistic propaganda to the exclusion of intervening in social struggles, the SLP became an isolated sect by the 1920s.

Socialist Workers Party Founded by American Trotskyists on New Year's Day 1938; under leadership of James P. Cannon, it was the revolutionary party in U.S. until its descent into reformism, 1960-65.

Souvarine, Boris (1895-1984) Joined French SP, 1916; polemicized against Lenin, 1917, but became supporter of Russian Revolution, 1918; founding member of CP and elected to its central committee, 1920; delegate to CI Third Congress and elected to ECCI, 1921; published Trotsky's *New Course* in France, 1924; expelled from French CP at CI Fifth Congress, 1925; published *Bulletin communiste*, 1925, and launched Cercle Communiste Marx et Lénine, 1926; argued that USSR had become "state capitalist" and that ILO should abandon Comintern, 1929; Trotsky broke relations with him; renamed group Cercle Communiste Démocratique, 1930; turned to anti-Communism around 1935 when he published *Stalin*; became pro-imperialist social democrat.

Souzo Pseudonym of Alfonso Leonetti.

Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAP, Socialist Workers Party of Germany) Formed in October 1931 by left-wing group expelled from German Social Democracy; in 1932 acquired split from German Right Opposition that subsequently assumed leadership of SAP; a signer of "The Declaration of Four," August 1933; later moved right and opposed formation of Fourth International.

Spartacus Youth Clubs (SYC) Local youth groups of CLA; became

Spartacus Youth League (SYL), youth group of WPUS, December 1934.

Spector, Maurice (1898–1968) Founder of Canadian CP, 1921; national chairman, 1924–28; privately sympathized with Trotskyist opposition from 1924; delegate to CI Sixth Congress in 1928 and elected to ECCI; in Moscow he and Cannon agreed to build support for Trotsky at home; expelled from Canadian CP in late 1928; founding member of CLA and on NC, 1929–34; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931–33 fight; leader of organization of Canadian Trotskyists formed in 1934; elected to WPUS NC, 1936, and SWP NC, 1938–39; resigned from movement in 1939.

Stamm, Tom Joined CLA, October 1930; supporter of Cannon faction in 1931–33 fight; business manager of *Militant*; part of Oehler faction, 1934–35; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–35; expelled with Oehler, late 1935; a leader of Oehler's Revolutionary Workers League (RWL); expelled with Basky from RWL, 1938; formed organization, also called RWL, that published *Revolt* from March 1938 to January 1940.

Sterling, Max Joined CP youth, 1927; supporter of Lovestone faction; expelled for Trotskyism and joined CLA, 1930; co-opted onto CLA National Youth Committee, 1932; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931–33 fight; member of Abern-Weber clique in WPUS, 1934–36; went with Muste to visit Trotsky in Norway, summer 1936; subsequently went to Spain and sent reports on Civil War to Trotskyist press; member of SWP, 1938–40; split from Trotskyist movement with Shachtman, 1940; member of Shachtman's Workers Party and leader of Bay Area branch; left WP after WWII. Known later as Mark Sharron.

Swabeck, Arne (1890–1986) Joined SP left wing, 1916; editor of SP Scandinavian Federation weekly press; IWW member, 1918–20; a leader of 1919 Seattle general strike; joined CP, 1920; delegate to CI Fourth Congress, 1922, and represented American CP on ECCI; member of CP Cannon faction; expelled for Trotskyism in 1928; founding member of CLA and on NC, 1929–34; founding member of WPUS and on NC, 1934–36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936–37; founding member of SWP on NC, 1938–67; began to advocate political support to Mao's Chinese Stalinists in late 1950s; expelled

from SWP, 1967; briefly a member of Progressive Labor Party in late 1960s.

Third Period According to Stalinist theory expounded in 1929, the post-WWI periods of revolutionary upsurge (1917-23) and capitalist stabilization (1924-28) were to be followed by a "third period" of capitalist collapse and the victory of socialism. During this time (1929-33), the Comintern adopted sectarian and adventurist tactics.

Tomsky, Mikhail Pavlovich (1880-1936) St. Petersburg lithographer; joined Bolsheviks, 1904; helped establish Reval (Talinin), Estonia Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 1905; delegate to Russian Social Democratic conferences, 1906 and 1907; arrested and imprisoned in Russia, 1908-17; a leader of Bolshevik organization in Petrograd, 1917; member of Bolshevik Central Committee, 1919-36; delegate to CI Second Congress, 1920, and elected to ECCI; general secretary of RILU, 1920; chairman of All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, 1922-29; coleader of Right Opposition with Bukharin and Rykov, 1928; capitulated to Stalin, 1929; committed suicide under threat of arrest, 1936.

Trachtenberg, Alexander L. (1884-1966) Participant in 1905 Russian Revolution as Social Democrat; after arrest and imprisonment, emigrated to U.S., 1906; active in SP student movement; head of research department of Rand School of Social Science, 1915-21; active in SP left wing during WWI; joined Communist movement as part of Workers Council group, 1921; CP central committee, 1921-23; delegate to CI Fourth and Fifth Congresses, 1922 and 1924; founded International Publishers as CP publishing house, 1924, remaining its head until 1962; arrested for Communist activity, 1953 and 1956.

Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) Federation of "revolutionary" trade unions initiated in 1929 in opposition to AFL as part of CP's Third Period turn; replaced Trade Union Educational League as CP's central trade-union organization; dissolved in 1934 as CP turned toward class collaborationism of Popular Front.

Treint, Albert (1889-1971) Joined French SP, 1910 or 1912; co-secretary of Committee to Join the Third International, 1919; founding member of French CP and elected to central committee, 1920;

CP general secretary, 1923–26; attended most plenums and congresses of CI, 1922–26; supporter of Zinoviev and Russian United Opposition, 1926–27; after Zinoviev capitulated, Treint was expelled from CP and published *Le Redressement communiste*, 1928; joined Ligue Communiste and elected member of executive committee, 1931; aligned with R. Molinier; resigned from Ligue, 1932; organized Effort Communiste linked with Urbahns' Leninbund, 1932–33; rejoined SP, 1934; associated with Pivert's left wing, 1935–37; worked with syndicalist tendency in CGT, 1937–39; retired from politics in early 1940s.

Tresso, Pietro (Blasco) (1893–1943) Joined Italian SP youth, 1909; opposed WWI with Italian SP majority; founding Italian Communist, 1921, and editor of CP journal *La Lotta Comunista*; leader of CP trade-union work, 1922–25; delegate to CI Fourth Congress, 1922; worked underground after Mussolini's seizure of power and was arrested several times; elected to CP central committee, 1926, and subsequently co-opted to political committee; left Italy for France, 1927; delegate at CI Sixth Congress, 1928; opposed Third Period turn and, with Leonetti and Paolo Ravazzoli, was expelled from CP, 1930, and formed New Italian Opposition (NOI); joined French Ligue; elected to Ligue executive committee, 1931; sided with Molinier on trade-union question; elected to ILO I.S., February 1933; expelled from Trotskysts, 1934, for opposing entry into French SP; subsequently joined SP with Naville's group which reunited with Trotskysts; expelled from SP, 1935; a leader of French Trotskysts, 1936–39; elected to executive committee of Fourth International at founding conference, 1938; arrested and imprisoned by Nazis, 1942; murdered by Stalinists after taking part in prison escape, fall 1943.

Unemployed Councils Federation of local organizations of unemployed formed by CP, 1930; fought for local relief projects and organized campaigns to stop evictions; led campaign for unemployed insurance; organized national "hunger marches," 1931 and 1932; merged with unemployed movements led by SP and WPUS to form Workers Alliance, 1936.

United Mine Workers (UMW) Industrial trade union of American miners formed in 1890; led by Lewis, 1920–60; played key role in formation of CIO in 1930s.

United Opposition A bloc between Trotskyist Left Opposition and supporters of Kamenev and Zinoviev, formed to fight Stalin-Bukharin leadership within Soviet CP in April 1926; initially included supporters of Democratic Centralists and Workers Opposition; bloc disintegrated after its program was declared incompatible with party membership and supporters were expelled en masse at Fifteenth Party Congress, December 1927.

Unser Kampf Yiddish journal published by CLA, February 1932 to November 1933.

Unser Wort Exile journal of German Trotskyists, published 1933-41.

Urbahns, Hugo (1890-1946) Leader of pro-Zinoviev left wing of German CP, along with Fischer and Maslow, 1922-27; expelled as supporter of Russian United Opposition, 1927; founder and principal leader of Leninbund, 1928-33; broke with ILO, refusing to defend USSR in Chinese Eastern Railroad dispute, 1929; developed view that USSR was "state capitalist"; after Hitler's victory, in exile first in Czechoslovakia, then Sweden.

Vanzler, Joseph (John G. Wright) (1902-1956) Joined CLA, 1933; son-in-law of Antoinette Konikow; chemist by training; owner of company that manufactured contraceptive jelly; supported B.J. Field group, but did not depart CLA over hotel strike; member of WPUS, 1934-36; entered SP with Trotskyists, 1936-37; founding member of SWP and elected to NC, 1939; translator of many of Trotsky's works; member of SWP writing staff until his death.

Walker, John A. President of Illinois Federation of Labor who supported Reorganized United Mine Workers, 1930.

Weber, Jack (1896-?) Pseudonym of Louis Jacobs. Joined CLA in 1930; supporter of Shachtman faction in 1931-33 fight; spokesman for Abern clique and alternate member of WPUS NC, 1934-36; supported SP entry and broke with Abern, 1936; founding member of SWP and on NC, 1938 through at least 1940; left SWP in 1944; contributed three articles to Shachtmanite *New International* in 1946-47, but does not appear to have joined Shachtman's organization.

Weber, Sara (1900-1976) Pseudonym of Sara Jacobs. Polish-born

CLA member and wife of Jack Weber; served as Trotsky's Russian-language secretary, June 1933–February 1934 and May 1938–January 1939.

Weinstone, William (1897–1985) Socialist student leader at City College of New York; founding American Communist and on central committee, 1921–23 and 1925–28; supporter of Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction, but allied briefly with Cannon faction, 1926–27; remained in CP after Lovestone's expulsion; editor of *Daily Worker*, 1931–32; prosecuted in 1953 under Smith Act and imprisoned for two years.

Weisbord, Albert (1900–1977) SP youth leader, 1921–24; joined CP, 1924; organizer of Passaic, New Jersey textile workers strike, 1926–27; supporter of CP Lovestone faction; expelled with Lovestone, 1929; advocated unity of Trotskyists and Lovestoneites; founded Communist League of Struggle, 1931; tried to gain entry into ILO but was never accepted; visited Trotsky in Prinkipo, 1932; worked with centrist POUM in Spain, 1937; disbanded CLS, 1937.

Well, Roman (1900–1962) Pseudonym of R. Sobolevicius. Stalinist agent active in German section of ILO, 1930–32; brother of Adolf Senin (A. Sobolevicius); member of I.S., 1932; leader of Leipzig branch; “defected” to Moscow in pro-Stalinist split, 1932; emigrated to U.S. during WWII where, as Robert Soblen, he became a well-known psychiatrist; led Stalinist spy ring that infiltrated SWP; was arrested on espionage charges, 1957; fled to Israel and committed suicide under threat of extradition to U.S., 1962.

Wicks, Harry (1889?–1957) Government agent in Socialist and Communist movements from 1919; SP member, 1915–19; joined CP, 1920; led split of those opposed to founding legal party; rejoined CP, 1922; supporter of Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction; member of central committee, 1922–23 and 1927–29; American representative to RILU, 1928–29; CI representative to Australia and Philippines, 1930–32; expelled as spy, 1938; joined Lovestone's organization; cooperated with FBI in anti-Communist investigations.

Witte (1901–1965) Pseudonym of Demetrios Giotopoulos. Leader of Greek Archio-Marxists, 1923–46; replaced Myrtos as Greek representative on ILO I.S., July 1932; I.S. member, Paris and Berlin, 1931–33; full-time I.S. secretary, 1933; removed for indiscipline,

September 1933; opposed turn toward building new parties and new international, 1933; led minority of Archio-Marxists into London Bureau while majority affiliated with Trotskyists, 1934; worked with POUM during Spanish Civil War and imprisoned by Stalinists, 1936-37; fought in Greek Resistance to Nazi occupation, but opposed Stalinists during Greek Civil War, 1943-49; became journalist.

Workers Party of the United States (WPUS) Revolutionary party formed through fusion of Communist League of America with Muste's American Workers Party, December 1934; dissolved when cadre entered Socialist Party to win over growing left wing, March 1936.

Young Spartacus Monthly organ of CLA National Youth Committee, 1931-34; SYCs, from April 1934; SYL, youth group of WPUS, from December 1934 until the Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party in 1936.

Zinoviev, Grigori Y. (1883-1936) Bolshevik from 1903; member of Central Committee from 1907; close collaborator of Lenin during WWI; head of Comintern, 1919-26; head of Leningrad party organization; allied with Kamenev and Stalin in "troika" against Trotsky, 1923-25; allied with Kamenev and Trotsky against Stalin in United Opposition, 1926-27; capitulated to Stalin, 1928; imprisoned, 1935; convicted in first Moscow Trial and executed.

References

Archival Sources: Key to the Abbreviations

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| A Papers | Martin Abern Papers, John Dwyer Collection, Part Two, Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Detroit, Michigan. |
| B Papers | George Breitman Papers, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York, New York. |
| C Papers | James P. Cannon and Rose Karsner Papers, 1919–1974, Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. |
| G Papers | Albert Glotzer Papers, Archives of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, California. |
| H Papers | Joseph Hansen Papers, Archives of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, California. |
| PRL | Collection of the Prometheus Research Library, New York, New York. |
| RWL Collection | Revolutionary Workers League Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York, New York. |
| S Papers | Max Shachtman Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York, New York. |
| SWP International Records | Socialist Workers Party Records, Archives of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, California. This archive contains the records of the American Trotskyist movement's participation in the ILO and Fourth International. |
| SWP Records | Socialist Workers Party Records, 1928–1985, Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. This archive |

contains the records of the American Trotskyist movement's domestic activity.

T Papers

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Published Works

This list is by no means a comprehensive bibliography of the period, but rather gives the full citations for the works cited in our introduction and notes. Some of the works listed are compilations of articles published years after their original date of writing. When the date of authorship is of significance, we have added it in parentheses after the title.

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Index

- Abern, Martin**, 6, 44, 49, 76, 195, 211, 212, 243, 325, 339, 352, 355, 356, 361, 364, 368, 387–88, 405, 415, 462, 474, 537–38, 614, 631, 641, 646, 652g; and 1939–40 faction fight, 3–4, 8, 75; and Cannon, 37, 50, 190–92, 246–48, 258, 560–61; on Cannon as CLA secretary, 59, 392, 395–402, 409–11; and Carter group, 181, 270, 291–92, 337–38, 461; on CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 74, 539–40, 561, 587; cliquism of, 8, 54–55, 58, 79, 620; expulsion of from CP, 10, 52, 252; and ILD, 10, 33; and ILO disputes, 3, 144–45, 174, 177, 179–80, 183, 188–89, 209, 224, 229, 236, 263, 280, 287, 300, 309–10, 318, 320, 327–28, 331–32; at June 1932 CLA plenum, 287, 291–95, 322; and PMA, 68, 513, 516–18, 553, 559; removal of from resident committee, 59, 472–73, 482, 497, 508, 523, 544, 548–49; runs CLA national office, 36, 191–92, 237, 239–43, 249, 410, 496; and Swabeck, 58, 392, 558–59; and Trotsky, 85, 141; votes in resident committee, 56, 68, 155, 184, 268, 326, 353, 402, 403–04, 416, 424, 429, 495, 499, 637, 644; withdraws from CLA activity, 46–47, 59, 76; and youth work, 11, 60, 76–77, 157–58. *See also* Shachtman faction
- Adler, Victor**, 277, 652g
- AFL**. *See* American Federation of Labor
- Allard, Gerry**, 63, 66–67, 203, 451, 452, 508, 539, 585, 590, 622, 639, 647, 652g; bends to anti-Communists in PMA, 432–33, 513–18, 622, 647; Cannon asks Trotsky's advice about, 69–70, 498–99, 508, 552–55; Cannon makes deal with, 69, 536, 538, 566–67
- American Federation of Labor (AFL)**, 34, 40, 51, 53, 62, 64, 65, 67, 70, 75, 412, 560, 561, 565, 652g
- American Workers Party (AWP)**, 1, 74, 604–05, 653g
- Amsterdam Congress**, 455, 641, 653g
- Andrade, Juan Rodriguez**, 228, 229, 341, 614, 653g
- Angelo, Joseph**, 63, 67, 69, 70, 202–03, 387, 452, 513, 518, 539, 552, 555, 564, 621, 622, 639, 649, 653g
- Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee**, 253, 653g
- Appeal to Reason*, 584, 653g
- Arbeiterstimme*, 89, 100, 654g
- Archio-Marxists (Greece)**, 25, 73, 487, 654g
- AWP**. *See* American Workers Party
- Baker, John (Miller)**, 135, 146
- Bartolomeo, Nicola Di**, 22, 654g
- Basin (CLA member)**, 208
- Basky, Louis**, 11, 282, 375, 381, 404, 574, 640, 642, 648, 654g; proposed for NC membership, 29, 49, 56, 257, 293–95, 303, 354, 633
- Bedacht, Max**, 51
- Berman (CLA member)**, 382
- Bernstein, Eduard**, 154, 161–64, 166–68, 208, 276, 277, 631, 655g
- Bittelman, Alexander**, 51, 252, 253, 636, 655g
- Black oppression in U.S.**, 32, 37, 40–44, 503–04, 518, 530, 541–42, 551, 578, 609; Scottsboro case, 42–43, 683g
- Blackwell, Russell**, 614, 620, 625, 655g
- Blasco**. *See* Tresso, Pietro
- Bleeker, Sylvia**, 74, 78, 358, 379, 384–86, 405, 510, 528, 562, 614, 655g
- BOC**. *See* Workers and Peasants Bloc
- Bolshevik Revolution**. *See* Russian Revolution

Bolshevik-Leninists. *See* Communist League of America; International Left Opposition; Left Opposition (Soviet Union)

Booth (CLA member), 412

Bordiga, Amadeo, 2, 22, 83, 656g

Bordigists, 656g. *See also* Prometeo Group

Bornstein (CLA member), 412

Brandler, Heinrich, 16, 50, 232, 251, 656g

Brandlerites. *See* Right Opposition

Breitman, George, 5, 607, 608, 609

Brinda, John, 206, 217

Brophy, John, 64

Browder, Earl, 31, 556, 656g

Buehler, Shorty, 204, 354, 657g

Bukharin, Nikolai, 9, 14-15, 30, 104, 252, 254, 255, 657g

Bukharinites. *See* Right Opposition

Bulletin of the Opposition, 58, 89, 91. *See also* Left Opposition (Soviet Union)

Burnham, James, 3-4, 74-76, 79, 657g

Buzzy (CLA member), 412

Bye, George, 349, 638

Cannon faction in CLA, 1, 5, 58, 74, 416-18, 458, 488, 557-59, 562-63, 583, 598, 600; attitude toward Trotsky, 480-85, 492-93, 495, 565; on Carter group, 60-61, 188, 270-72, 278-79, 283, 311-12, 335-38, 366, 382, 464; on CLA 3rd conference date, 462, 476, 482, 485, 495, 499, 504-06, 510, 589, 598-600; composition of, 4, 62, 78, 463, 571, 574; on co-optations to NC, 56-57, 76, 293-95, 303-04, 312-13, 340, 352-55, 372, 378-82, 387, 459-60, 463-64, 466-67, 473, 474, 523, 528, 544, 640; on Engels introduction, 60-61, 153-69, 180-82, 195, 208, 313, 318, 331, 374; on June 1932 CLA plenum, 186-87, 218, 279-80, 306-14, 323-24, 326-40, 366, 372, 413, 414, 475-76, 558-59; Shachtman faction's view of, 357-58, 373, 376-77, 382-84, 391-92, 411, 500-03, 522-28, 572; on Swabeck's European

trip, 58-59, 363-66, 496; Trotsky's view of, 361-62, 362-63, 381-84, 411, 463-65, 472-87, 507-08, 529, 546, 565

Cannon faction in CP (1925-28), 10-12, 30, 33, 37, 50-55, 65, 194-95, 221, 233, 248, 251-57, 304-05, 497, 522-23, 525, 558, 574, 619, 636

Cannon-Foster faction in CP (1923-25), 51, 619, 637, 649

Cannon, James P., 1-3, 13, 32-33, 57, 64, 169, 183, 355, 356, 421, 582, 594, 614, 618, 657g; and 1939-40 faction fight, 4-5, 79; and Abern, 3, 4, 37, 50, 190-92, 247-48, 257-58, 327; on Allard, 63, 498-99, 513-15, 536, 622; on black oppression, 37, 41-43; and Carter group, 60-61, 157-60, 258-59, 335; and CI, 8, 195; at CI 6th congress, 9, 37, 41, 51, 254; at CLA 1st conference, 35, 37, 190; at CLA 2nd conference, 29, 194; on CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 6, 73-74, 472, 539-40, 556, 561, 568, 574-77, 584, 587-90, 596-98, 601; as CLA secretary, dispute over, 59, 391-403, 408-11, 461-62, 465, 473; on "gestation" of CLA, 50-52, 251-57; at Gillespie union conference, 67-68, 412, 433-34, 446, 448-51, 508-09, 531, 539, 643; and Glotzer, 3, 4, 37, 50, 192, 257, 327, 539; internationalism of, 7, 22-23, 51; at June 1932 CLA plenum, 283, 291-92, 294-96, 298, 306-14; on labor party slogan, 37-38, 40, 51, 637; lessons learned from CLA fight, 8, 80, 492-93, 495; and *Militant*, 35-37, 45, 191-92, 195, 234, 240-42, 244-45, 247, 264, 295, 301, 305-06, 322, 462, 577-78; and miners, 68-70, 381, 413-15, 495-96, 498-99, 506-09, 512-15, 530-32, 536, 553-54, 564, 590, 647; personal crisis of, 35-37, 49-50, 54, 189-93, 238, 243-44; and "Prospect and Retrospect," 55, 60, 230-31, 375, 391-92; and Red Army dispute, 421-28, 435-48, 559; runs CLA national

- office, 189, 213, 237-42, 410; and Shachtman, 3, 4, 37, 47, 48, 50, 59, 76, 192, 229-30, 247-48, 327; and Shachtman faction, 55-56, 180-82, 184, 220, 229-30; Shachtman faction's view of, 7, 50-51, 54, 185, 187, 208-11, 224, 238-81, 298-306, 318-21, 323-25, 363, 369-70, 380, 384-90, 391-97, 398, 399-402, 408-11, 435-46, 500-03, 512, 518, 522-28, 546-47, 557, 559-61, 572-73; on Shachtman in ILO, 2-3, 28-29, 144-45, 169, 171, 174, 182, 188-89, 236-37, 263-70, 299, 301-02, 309, 317-18, 326-34, 376, 632; and Spector, 76, 190, 240; and Swabeck, 49, 195, 571; as SWP leader, 1, 13-14, 74, 609; and trade-union work, 70, 417-18, 560; and Trotsky, 4, 8, 46, 70-71, 345-46, 495; votes in resident committee, 155, 177, 184, 306, 315, 326, 353, 371, 403, 416, 429, 448, 495-97, 499, 648; and Weisbord, 345-52, 359, 466, 496-97, 651; on youth question, 77, 270-72, 311. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA; Cannon faction in CP; Cannon-Foster faction in CP; Communist League of America; Socialist Workers Party
- Capelis, Herbert, 282, 358, 560, 642, 658g
- Carlson, Oliver, 11, 274, 609, 658g
- Carmody, Jack, 525, 553, 658g
- Carr (CLA member), 563
- Carter group, 60-61, 188, 270-72, 278-79, 283, 296, 311-12, 316, 366, 382, 464, 549; Cannon faction's view of, 334-38, 400, 458-59, 461, 475-76; Shachtman faction's view of, 290-91, 293, 299, 302-03, 318, 320, 373, 376-77, 380, 527
- Carter, Joseph, 180, 276, 296, 311, 328, 378, 562, 564, 658g; Cannon faction's view of, 61, 188, 258-59, 270, 458; on Engels introduction, 60, 153, 156-62, 195-96, 208-10, 313, 331; Shachtman's view of, 270-72, 278-79, 389, 587; as youth leader, 11-12, 77
- Catalan Federation. *See* Workers and Peasants Bloc
- Cauldwell, Sylvia, 27
- CGT. *See* Confédération Générale du Travail
- CGTU. *See* Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire
- Charleroi Federation. *See* International Left Opposition: Belgian section of
- Chen Duxiu, 13, 609, 658g
- Chiang Kai-shek, 13, 18, 439
- China, 18, 31; Second Revolution in, 9, 13, 114, 253
- Chinese Eastern Railroad, 12, 18-19, 439
- CI. *See* Communist International
- CIO. *See* Congress of Industrial Organizations
- CLA. *See* Communist League of America
- Clarke, George, 69, 77, 199, 204-05, 282, 354, 379, 394, 553, 574, 584, 598, 622, 639, 659g; proposed for NC membership, 56, 293-95, 303
- CLS. *See* Communist League of Struggle
- Collinet, Michel, 342, 659g
- Comintern. *See* Communist International
- Communist International (CI, Comintern, Third International), 1-2, 12, 27, 31, 65, 126, 195, 252, 352, 418, 422, 504, 530, 619, 629, 641, 659g; 2nd congress of, 24; 3rd congress of, 68; 4th congress of, 10; 5th congress of, 208, 639; 6th congress of, 9, 37, 41, 51, 237, 252, 254, 636; degeneration of, 7-9, 55, 57, 113, 115, 129, 191, 284, 440, 468, 569; and Right Opposition, 14-16, 31. *See also* Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee; Red International of Labor Unions; Third Period
- Communist League of America (CLA), 1-4, 33, 35, 46, 52, 111, 149; 1st conference of, 37, 38, 181, 188-90, 209, 236, 238-39, 371; 2nd conference of, 29, 38, 42, 65, 146, 181, 193-94, 214-15, 226, 233, 251, 255, 257-60, 264, 269, 307, 308, 317, 371, 457, 522, 633,

634, 640; and 3rd conference date, 359-60, 369, 371, 386-90, 456, 462, 465-66, 469-71, 499-508, 510, 512-13, 524, 529, 534-35, 539, 595-99, 603; and black oppression, 41-42, 44, 209; Boston branch of, 11, 199, 213-14, 366-67, 377, 379-82, 384, 387, 389-90, 405, 459-60, 476, 499, 588, 590, 639; Canadian branches of, 12, 199-201, 272, 388-89, 464, 502, 512, 524; and Cannon as national secretary, 59, 392-403, 408-11; and Carter group, 60-61, 188, 270-72, 278-79, 283, 290-91, 296, 299, 302-03, 311-12, 316, 335-38, 366, 373, 376-77, 382, 458-59, 464, 549; Chicago branch of, 201-02, 218, 245, 324, 377, 384, 387, 390, 405, 412-13, 448, 459, 527, 536, 563-64, 574-75, 579, 586-90, 596, 646, 649, 651; and Communist Party, 30, 32, 38, 61, 72, 199-200, 201, 203, 207, 215, 232-33, 237, 421-22, 428, 457, 460, 540, 565-66, 614-15, 640, 643; and Engels introduction, 60-61, 153-69, 182, 208, 275-79, 292, 304, 313, 318, 322, 331, 374, 458, 631-32; Expansion Program of, 47, 49, 106, 214, 457, 619; finances of, 49, 58, 135, 353, 356, 363, 364-65, 397-98, 400-01, 403-05, 407-08, 409, 461, 493, 511, 533, 545, 582, 584, 590, 600, 601-02, 647-48; German campaign of, 32, 61, 421-22, 457, 468, 497, 504; "gestation" of, 50-54, 194-95, 248, 251-60, 304-05, 457, 523, 525; headquarters move to Chicago, 6, 73-74, 483-84, 539-40, 555-56, 560-61, 568-69, 574-77, 581, 584-90, 594-603; and ILO, 2-3, 23, 27-30, 109-11, 133, 170-83, 188, 220-21, 264-70, 283-87, 289, 308-11, 320, 326-34, 376, 633, 636; ILO view of faction fight in, 455-79, 488-89, 493-94, 504-06, 510, 534-35, 543-51, 591-93; impasse of, 1, 30-33, 213; Kansas City branch of, 204-05, 354, 377, 379, 413, 502, 512, 524, 588, 651; and labor party slogan, 38-

40, 196-97, 209, 253-55, 634; membership of, 10-12, 69, 199-208, 213-14, 234, 457, 651; and miners, 6, 62-70, 202-03, 233, 381, 413-15, 429-34, 446, 448-52, 455, 468, 476, 495-99, 506-10, 512-18, 522, 529-32, 538-39, 552-55, 558, 559, 562, 566-67, 569, 575-76, 578, 585, 591-93, 622, 639, 640; Minneapolis branch of, 10-11, 53, 62, 205-07, 216-18, 233, 352-53, 379, 382, 403, 512, 522, 524, 588; and Minneapolis strikes (1934), 3, 62, 69, 74; National Youth Committee of, 158-60, 290, 302, 394; New York branch of, 6, 60-62, 181, 242, 247-48, 258-59, 272-74, 290-91, 296, 302-03, 308, 311-12, 318, 334-38, 357-58, 382-83, 389, 400, 405, 461, 472-73, 526-28, 539, 556-59, 561-63, 565-66, 568-69, 574, 576-77, 583-87, 588, 594-95, 597-98, 602-03, 637, 646; organizational practices of, 56-58; "peace treaty" in, 54, 73, 542-43; and proletarianization of New York branch, 62, 416-20, 459-60, 474, 483; publications of, 47-48, 214, 618-19; and Red Army dispute, 72-73, 421-28, 435-48, 489-91, 510; and Swabeck's European trip, 58-59, 352-56, 361-67, 384, 407-08, 477-78; and theoretical journal, 47-48, 116, 234, 262, 561, 577, 581, 584, 594, 600-02, 606, 630; Toronto branch dispute, 282, 296-98, 304, 313, 322, 368-69, 375, 378, 385, 564; and trade-union work, 52-53, 65-66, 199, 206-07, 216-18, 366-67, 380-81, 460, 476, 560, 591-93; and weekly *Militant*, 33-34, 44-48, 189-95, 213-14, 234, 238-51, 262; and workers clubs, formation of, 560, 567, 578-80, 582; youth leaders of, 11-12, 76-77, 153, 158. See also *Communistes*; *Militant*; National Committee, CLA; resident committee, CLA; Spartacus Youth Clubs; *Unser Kampf*; *Young Spartacus*

Communist League of Struggle (CLS),

- 345-46, 348, 349-50, 496-97, 640-41, 651. *See also* Weisbord
- Communist Party (Opposition) (Lovestoneites), 16, 30-32, 48, 52-53, 65, 111, 130, 196, 219, 232, 251, 348, 415, 437, 439, 566, 604-05, 625, 627, 642. *See also* Gitlow; Lovestone; Right Opposition; Winitsky
- Communist Party, Austria, 12, 611, 625. *See also* *Arbeiterstimme*
- Communist Party, Canada, 12, 199, 200-01, 634, 635, 636
- Communist Party, France, 20, 284, 629
- Communist Party, Germany (KPD), 16, 18, 22, 61, 71, 284, 647
- Communist Party, Great Britain, 136-37, 630
- Communist Party, Soviet Union, 2, 13, 17, 27, 50, 253, 281, 419
- Communist Party, Spain, 19, 53-54, 611
- Communist Party, United States, 2, 4, 8-10, 34-35, 39, 46, 54, 89, 127, 180, 456-57, 585, 605, 632, 635, 639; and black oppression, 32, 40-44, 503-04; and Cannon faction (1925-28), 10-12, 37, 50-55, 65, 194-95, 251-57, 304-05, 497, 522-23, 525, 574, 619, 636; and Cannon-Foster faction (1923-25), 51, 619, 637, 649; and CLA, 30-33, 61, 72, 199-203, 207, 215, 232-33, 237, 421-22, 428, 457, 460, 540, 545, 565-66, 614-15, 640, 643; and farmer-labor party slogan, 37-38, 574, 637; and Foster faction (1925-29), 30-32, 37, 65, 195, 252-54, 574, 614, 636; and *Freiheit*, 415, 663g; and Lovestone faction, 16, 30-32, 50-52, 195, 251-52, 254-55, 574, 619, 649; and trade-union work, 65-66, 75, 380-81, 429-30, 433, 650; and Unemployed Councils, 32, 44, 202, 207, 421, 472. *See also* Third Period; Young Communist League
- Communistes*, 48, 198, 213, 215, 234, 261, 262, 273, 618, 659g
- Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), 122, 130, 139, 629
- Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire (CGTU), 20, 122, 130, 139, 284, 611, 629, 659g
- Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA), 64-66, 70, 430-31, 585, 590, 604, 643, 660g
- Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), 40, 70, 75, 660g
- Coover, Oscar, 11, 513, 614, 660g
- Cort, Michael (Floyd Cleveland Miller), 27
- Cowl, Carl, 5, 77-78, 206, 282, 323, 352, 387, 660g
- CP. *See* Communist Party, United States
- CPLA. *See* Conference for Progressive Labor Action
- D**
- Daladier, Eduard, 552
- Debs, Eugene V., 34, 40
- Democratic Party, 34, 40
- Dunne, Miles, 11, 217, 660g
- Dunne, Vincent R., 4, 11, 62, 185-86, 206, 249, 257, 295, 300, 305, 324, 346, 353, 371, 382, 492, 571, 614, 661g. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
- Dunne, William F., 10-11, 42, 661g
- E**
- Eastman, Max, 10, 14, 91, 105, 116, 173, 460, 561, 610, 627, 643-44, 649, 661g
- Edwards, John, 11, 38, 387-88, 395, 412, 513, 518, 539, 540, 571, 575, 585, 587, 589, 609, 614, 639, 661g
- Eisenstein, Sergei, 136
- Engels, Friedrich. *See* Communist League of America; and Engels introduction
- Etienne. *See* Zborowski, Mark
- F**
- Fascism. *See* Germany: fascism's rise in
- Felix, 25, 121-22, 130, 132, 133, 139-40, 143, 209, 219, 224, 228, 280, 329, 333, 662g
- FI. *See* Fourth International
- Field, B.J., 74, 273, 369, 562-64, 574, 579-80, 583, 647-48, 651, 662g; expulsions of, from CLA (1932, 1934), 70, 345-48, 350, 623
- Field, Esther, 563
- Fischer, Ruth, 12, 23, 52, 609, 662g

- Fishwick, Harry, 63-64
 Food Workers Industrial Union, 61
 Ford, James, 34
 Fosco. *See* Bartolomeo, Nicola Di
 Foster, William Z., 34, 51, 55, 63, 249, 349, 393, 556, 641, 662g; and Cannon-Foster faction in CP (1923-25) 51, 619, 637, 649; and Foster faction in CP (1925-29), 30-32, 37, 65, 195, 252-54, 574, 614, 636
 Fourth International (FI), 1, 13, 26-27, 73-75, 588, 601, 620. *See also* International Left Opposition; Left Opposition (Soviet Union)
 Fox (CLA member), 180, 338
 Fraina, Louis, 584
 Frank, Pierre, 25, 94, 121, 127, 130, 142, 226-27, 229, 265, 352, 504, 548-49, 612, 663g
 Frank, Walter, 205
 Frankel, Jan, 21, 25, 87, 90, 93, 102-04, 108, 112, 114, 121, 125, 173, 478-79, 613, 645, 663g
Freiheit. *See* Communist Party, United States: *Freiheit*
 Frey, Josef, 12, 22, 89, 100-02, 110, 255, 344, 546-47, 625, 663g
 Friedman, Joseph. *See* Carter group; Carter, Joseph
Gardanis (CLA member), 562-63
 Gastonia, North Carolina, strike, 11, 42, 44, 575, 649
 Gates, Albert. *See* Glotzer, Albert
 Gauche Communiste, 19-20, 117, 342-43, 628, 664g
 Geltman, Emanuel (Manny Garrett), 394, 415-16, 526, 562, 641, 664g
 Gérard, Francis. *See* Rosenthal, Gérard
 Geretsky (CLA member), 199
 Germany: fascism's rise in, 6, 21-22, 26, 58, 71-72, 103, 137, 421-28, 435-36, 441-43, 447, 457, 468, 489-91, 494, 497, 505, 555, 558, 647. *See also* Communist Party, Germany; United Opposition of Germany
 Giacomi (NOI member), 73
 Giganti, Joe, 30, 325, 395, 412, 575, 586, 589, 664g
 Girault, Suzanne, 129, 629
 Gitlow, Benjamin, 31, 89, 597, 642, 650, 651, 665g
 Glotzer, Albert, 3-6, 11, 45, 47, 49, 78, 181, 210-11, 220-22, 236, 243, 245-46, 256-57, 263, 323, 339, 361, 364, 388, 461, 479-80, 500, 506, 550, 571, 574, 614, 619, 639, 665g; on black oppression, 41, 541-42; on Cannon, 5, 37, 50-51, 187-97, 224, 412-16; on Carter group, 188, 270; and Chicago student antiwar conference, 391, 394-95, 415, 641; on CLA 3rd conference date, 369, 387, 586-88, 603; and CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 539-40, 556, 569, 575, 586-90; cliquism of, 8, 54-55, 280, 298; on "gestation" of CLA, 194-95; international resolution of, 177-78, 183, 209, 300, 309-10, 318, 320, 327, 331-32, 337-38, 458, 541; and Jewish Group (France), 141-44, 228-29, 330, 634; at June 1932 CLA plenum, 283, 287, 292-95, 298, 326-28; on labor party, 38; and miners, 452, 513, 518, 536-39, 647; moves to Chicago, 57, 76, 352; national tour report of, 197-208, 212-18, 223, 354, 379; visits Trotsky (1931), 119-20, 140, 173, 187-88, 195-96, 261, 347, 363, 365; votes in resident committee, 56, 145, 155, 174, 184, 267, 326, 352-53, 474, 637, 648; on weekly *Militant*, 189-93; withdraws from CLA activity, 212-13. *See also* Shachtman faction
 Goldberg (CLA member), 204, 387
 Goldman, Albert, 72, 416, 642, 665g
 Gomez, Manuel, 10, 665g
 Gonzales (CLA member), 345
 Gordon, Sam, 35, 61, 77, 144, 280, 282, 298, 370, 525, 574, 579, 623, 648, 666g; proposed for NC membership, 56-57, 293-95, 303, 388, 539. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
 Gorkin, Julián, 348, 666g

Gould, Nathan, 60, 412–13, 414, 589, 666g
 Gourget, Pierre, 20, 28–29, 93–97, 99, 104, 115, 118, 529–30, 532, 611, 626, 628, 633, 666g
 Gourov. *See* Trotsky, Leon
 GPU. *See* Stalinists
 Graef, Y., 21, 611
 Green, William, 34, 64, 591
 Grylewicz, Anton, 97, 101, 103, 667g

Hamilton (CLA member), 413
 Hitler, Adolf. *See* Germany: fascism's rise in
 Hitler-Stalin pact, 3, 79, 622
 Hoover, Herbert, 33–34
 Howat, Alexander, 64, 66, 622, 667g

ICE. *See* *Oposición Comunista de España*
 ICOR, 560, 649
 I.L.D. *See* International Labor Defense
 I.L.O. *See* International Left Opposition
 Independent Socialist Party, Holland (OSP), 73
 Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), 10–11, 40, 271, 401, 411, 463, 643, 667g
 International Labor Defense (ILD), 10, 32–33, 68, 448, 615, 667g
 International Left Opposition (ILO), 1–3, 12–15, 17–30, 53–55, 103, 251, 283–85, 336, 351, 356, 423, 439, 503, 607, 625, 646, 667g; Administrative Secretariat of, 25, 92, 612; April 1930 conference of, 2, 23, 83–85, 87, 92, 95, 133, 188, 329, 612; and Austria, 3, 12, 90, 99, 100–03, 110–11, 115, 546–47, 611; Belgian section of, 12, 18–19, 83–85, 111, 118; Chinese section of, 13, 99, 100; and CLA faction fight, 3, 6, 26, 455–56, 465–71, 476–78, 485–86, 488, 493–94, 500, 504–06, 510, 534–35, 540, 543–44, 548, 564, 568, 599, 601; Copenhagen meeting of (1932), 26, 58, 353, 477; in Czechoslovakia, 223, 469, 480, 489,

546, 644; and Greek Archio-Marxists, 25, 73; *International Bulletin* of, 7, 22, 24–26, 88, 92, 140; International Bureau of, 23, 25, 28, 89–90, 102, 109; International Preconference of (1933), 2, 22, 26, 58, 72, 353, 407–08, 455–56, 458, 462, 472, 477–78, 493, 644; International Secretariat, functioning of, 25–26, 86–88, 95, 111, 119–20, 124–26, 179–80, 265, 286, 288, 479, 631; International Secretariat and Germany, 21, 106, 109, 112, 115; International Secretariat, reorganization of, 174–80, 613; May 1933 plenum of, 519, 530–36, 543–44, 559; and turn toward Fourth International, 72–73, 552, 555, 581, 583–84, 588, 594, 601, 648. *See also* Fourth International; Left Opposition (Soviet Union); Ligue Communiste de France; New Italian Opposition; *Oposición Comunista de España*; United Opposition of Germany
 International Workers Order (IWO), 560, 649
 IWW. *See* Industrial Workers of the World
 Izquierda Comunista de España. *See* *Oposición Comunista de España*

Jewish Group (France), 25, 73, 121–22, 128–32, 139–42, 175, 178, 221, 224, 227–28, 285, 288, 330, 343, 634, 667g.
See also Ligue Communiste de France
 Joel (CLA member), 564
 Joko, 101, 103, 626
 Jouhaux, Léon, 130, 629
 Judd, Helen, 412, 668g

Kaldis, Aristodimos, 526, 563, 668g
 Kamenev, Lev B., 9, 485, 610, 668g
 Karsner, David, 35
 Karsner, Rose, 10, 35, 47, 49, 59, 69, 536, 609, 647, 668g
 Karsner Ross, Walta, 35
 Kassan (CLA member), 204

- Kautsky, Karl, 154, 161-67, 276, 278, 632, 668g
- Keck, William, 434, 450, 669g
- Kitt (CLA member), 562-63, 598
- Klement, Rudolph, 26
- Kommunist, Der*, 97, 100, 103, 669g
- Konikow, Antoinette, 11, 59, 669g
- Korsch, Karl, 439, 669g
- KPD. *See* Communist Party, Germany
- Krehm, William, 272, 297, 313, 322, 368-69, 378, 385, 564, 636, 669g
- Kun, Béla, 127, 629
- L**a Follette, Robert M., 37-39, 51, 304, 637
- Labor party slogan, 37-40, 51, 196-97, 209, 219, 222, 226, 230, 253-55, 634, 637
- Lacroix, Henri, 122, 134, 219, 224, 226, 228, 341, 345, 614, 670g
- Lafargue, Paul, 154, 164, 670g
- Landau, Kurt, 23, 89, 118, 132, 134, 144, 169, 171-72, 179, 188, 194, 229, 250, 269-70, 279, 285, 301, 375-76, 389, 445, 546-47, 612, 613, 670g; Cannon faction on, 175-76, 334, 337, 633; cliquism of, 20-22, 28, 54-55; and October 1930 German conference, 21, 96-97, 503, 645; Shachtman on, 2, 27-30, 79, 100-02, 106, 109-10, 112-13, 130, 147, 224, 226-27, 265-67, 288, 318, 342-44, 613, 632; Trotsky on, 90, 97-98, 102-04, 108-09, 114-16, 218-19, 329, 348, 549, 626
- Landler, Jenö, 127, 629
- Lassalle, Ferdinand, 157, 670g
- LD. *See* Trotsky, Leon
- Left Opposition (Soviet Union), 1-2, 9-10, 14-17, 21, 23, 25, 84, 96, 124, 171, 235, 244-45, 253-55, 260, 344. *See also* *Bulletin of the Opposition*; Fourth International; International Left Opposition
- Lenin, V.I., 80, 110, 153, 157, 161-67, 276, 278, 314, 370, 426-27, 443, 580, 610, 627; on party organization, 357, 481-85, 554
- Leninbund, 12, 18, 85, 101, 609, 613, 626, 671g. *See also* United Opposition of Germany
- Leningrad Opposition. *See* United Opposition (Soviet Union)
- Leonetti, Alfonso (Souzo), 22, 25, 96, 120, 612, 671g
- Lesoil, Léon, 12, 19
- Lewis, John L., 33, 62-63, 66, 70, 203, 429, 513, 515, 552, 671g
- Lewit, Morris, 4, 5, 45, 48, 74, 78, 90, 193, 358, 379, 384-88, 405, 510, 562-63, 571, 587, 614, 618, 671g; proposed for NC membership, 29, 49, 194, 257-60, 303, 317, 522, 528, 633
- Liebknecht, Karl, 157, 672g
- Liebknecht, Wilhelm, 154, 162, 242, 672g
- Ligue Communiste de France, 70, 142, 186, 266, 286, 570, 672g; and CGTU, 139-40, 629; CLA on, 54, 174-80, 285, 309, 633; Gauche Communiste splits from, 117, 611; ILO secretariat depends on, 23, 87, 92, 119-20, 124-25; Rosmer withdraws from, 86, 94-96; Shachtman on, 98-100, 106-07, 117, 123, 126-31, 133, 147, 188-89, 209, 218-19, 227-28, 263, 288-89, 317, 329, 333-34, 341-43; trade-union dispute in, 20, 92-94, 100, 104, 121-22, 129-30, 139-40, 142-43, 229, 264-65, 529-30, 611, 626, 629; Trotsky on, 25, 29, 92-98, 121-22, 132, 290-91, 611, 626. *See also* Jewish Group (France); *Lutte des classes*; *Opposition Unitaire*; *Vérité*
- London Bureau, 13, 73, 672g
- Lore, Ludwig, 23, 30, 52, 91, 628, 672g
- Lovestone, Jay, 10, 16, 30, 37, 249, 393, 641, 673g. *See also* Communist Party (Opposition); Lovestone faction in CP; Right Opposition
- Lovestone faction in CP, 30-32, 50-52, 195, 251-52, 254-55, 574, 619, 649
- Lovestoneites. *See* Communist Party (Opposition)
- Lurye, Minnie, 415
- Lutte des classes, La*, 88, 96, 230, 288, 673g

- Luxemburg, Rosa, 153, 157, 160–62, 168, 276, 277, 673g
- Lyova. *See* Sedov, Leon
- M**acDonald, Jack, 232, 296, 368, 378, 635, 673g
- Mahnruf Group, 20, 22, 89, 90, 100, 102, 115, 118, 625, 626, 674g
- Makinson, Lista, 35
- Malamuth, Charles, 141, 631
- Malkin, Maurice, 91, 180, 273, 274, 338, 674g
- Marc (French Ligue member), 128–29
- Markin, N. *See* Sedov, Leon
- Martin, F., 412, 590
- Martin, Homer, 75
- Marx, Karl, 80, 153, 161, 165, 208, 242, 276–78, 314, 619, 627, 632
- Mashow, Joe, 412, 575
- Maslow, Arkadi, 12, 23, 52, 255, 609, 674g
- Matheson, Bill, 526, 562–63
- Maurín, Joaquín, 19, 53–54, 226, 610, 674g
- Militant*, 28, 36, 58, 60, 86, 116, 118, 133, 139–41, 145, 198–204, 399, 457, 466, 540, 560–61, 567, 577–79, 584, 590, 594, 601; editorial board of, 462; financing of, 14, 27, 33–35, 45–48, 85, 247, 356, 384–85, 396, 409, 545; and German campaign, 72, 421, 437, 442, 448, 504, 511, 646; and miners, 63–66, 432–34, 498, 518; and Mooney defense, 536–38, 555; Shachtman as editor of, 76, 144, 170, 211, 295, 298, 301, 309, 325, 331, 405, 462, 640; tensions over weekly, 33–34, 44–48, 189–95, 213–14, 234, 238–51, 262. *See also* Communist League of America
- Mill, M., 90, 92, 94, 96, 100–02, 132, 144, 627, 675g; as ILO international secretary, 25–26, 119–20, 125–26, 174, 176, 286, 288; and Jewish Group, 25, 121, 209, 285–86; and *Opposición Comunista de España*, 19, 25, 133, 177, 289, 343; Shachtman on, 2–3, 30, 133–34, 147, 219, 221, 224–29, 329–33, 549
- Milton (CLA member), 358, 562
- Molinier, Henri, 108, 675g
- Molinier, Raymond, 24–25, 87, 90, 117, 139, 533, 614, 627, 675g; Shachtman on, 99–101, 121–31, 227–29, 289, 342–43; and trade-union question, 20, 94, 121, 142, 626; Trotsky on, 92, 132, 224–25
- Monatte, Pierre, 94
- Montagu, Ivor Goldsmid, 90, 136–38, 630
- Mooney, Thomas J., 68, 451, 495–96, 536–39, 555, 566, 647, 676g
- Morgenstern, Bernard, 56, 78, 220, 304, 354, 371–72, 382, 385–86, 614, 676g. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
- Muste, A.J., 1, 348, 561, 676g. *See also* American Workers Party; Conference for Progressive Labor Action
- Myrtos (Archio-Marxists), 25
- N**ational Committee, CLA (NC), 196, 218, 233, 279, 522; composition of, 11–12, 194, 257, 458, 471, 476–77, 486, 495, 497, 524, 608, 609, 614, 633; and co-optation dispute, 56–57, 293–95, 303–04, 312–13, 321, 352–55, 378–82, 387, 459–60, 465, 473, 474, 523, 528; June 1932 plenum of, 54, 60, 184–87, 282–323, 369–70, 387; May 1930 plenum of, 46–47, 76, 181, 192, 236, 248, 249–50, 316, 633; polls of, 56, 155, 174, 179, 184, 472, 496, 608, 644. *See also* Communist League of America; resident committee
- National Miners Union (NMU), 63–64, 203, 634, 676g
- National Recovery Act, 34, 567, 585, 650
- National Union of Miners (NUM), 66
- Naville, Claude, 117
- Naville, Pierre, 21, 55, 131, 144, 169, 171–72, 175–79, 188, 194, 221, 250, 270, 279, 291, 376, 445, 613, 632, 676g; in ILO, 23–25, 84, 87, 90, 285, 337, 534, 544, 580; Shachtman on, 3, 27–28, 30, 79, 99–100, 106–07, 134, 147, 218–19, 224, 226–30, 265–67, 269, 288–89, 301, 318, 329, 333,

- 342-44, 549; and trade-union dispute, 20, 121; Trotsky on, 2, 29, 92-98, 104-05, 109, 115-18, 131-33, 141, 280, 626, 633
- NC. *See* National Committee, CLA
- Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union (NTWIU), 62, 199, 200, 366-67, 380, 416, 476
- Neumann, 97, 101, 103, 627
- Neurath, Alois, 232, 644, 677g
- New Economic Policy (NEP), 14-16
- New Italian Opposition (NOI), 22, 73, 86, 88, 255, 677g
- Nin, Andrés, 2-3, 13, 19, 54, 79, 105, 110-11, 123-24, 134, 219, 224, 226, 228, 504, 541, 610, 611, 646, 678g
- NMU. *See* National Miners Union
- NOI. *See* New Italian Opposition
- NRA. *See* National Recovery Act
- NTWIU. *See* Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union
- O**CE. *See* *Opposición Comunista de España*
- Oehler, Hugo, 5, 11, 60, 202, 209, 218, 220, 295, 356, 362, 451, 492, 500, 523-24, 537, 642, 648, 678g; on black oppression, 42; on Cannon as national secretary, 59, 397-402, 408-09; on CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 540, 584, 589; in CLA national leadership, 57, 59, 186, 257-58, 353, 355, 614, 644; and miners, 33, 67, 69, 360, 410, 421, 434, 452, 495-96, 518, 538, 623, 639; Shachtman faction on, 185, 301, 305, 324, 358, 370, 388-89, 393, 406, 409, 540; splits from Trotskyist movement, 77, 78. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
- O'Flaherty, Tom, 53, 208-09, 620, 678g
- Opposición Comunista de España* (OCE), 13, 19, 25, 52-54, 105, 121-25, 145, 177-78, 223, 228, 286, 289, 325-26, 331, 341-45, 529, 549, 611, 614, 678g
- Opposition Unitaire (OU), 20, 65, 93, 104, 139, 439, 611, 679g. *See also* Ligue Communiste de France
- Orland, Albert, 358, 526, 528
- OSP. *See* Independent Socialist Party, Holland
- OU. *See* Opposition Unitaire
- Overstraeten, Eduard Van (War), 12, 18-19, 23, 52, 83, 95, 98, 115, 288, 344, 610, 679g
- P**ablo, Michel, 13, 74, 609
- Papcun, George, 61
- Pappas, Sebastian, 61, 526, 563, 679g
- Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista. *See* POUM
- Paz, Maurice, 14, 22-23, 98, 121, 140, 179, 244, 255, 288, 344, 679g
- Pearcy, Claud, 434, 450, 514, 517, 679g
- Pepper, John, 52, 127, 190, 240, 252, 574, 629, 649, 679g
- Petras, 358, 382, 528, 640-41, 642, 680g
- Pfemfert, Franz, 85
- Pilsudski, Josef, 443, 680g
- PMA. *See* Progressive Miners of America
- Pollak, 288
- POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista), 611, 612, 680g
- Profintern. *See* Red International of Labor Unions
- Progressive Miners of America (PMA), 62-70, 75, 381, 412, 421, 429-34, 448-51, 498, 513-18, 530-32, 536, 552-54, 622, 639, 640, 680g
- Proletarian Party, 201-02, 634, 651
- Prometeo Group, 2, 22-23, 27, 29, 83-85, 95, 110-11, 115, 130, 145, 226, 255, 264-65, 344, 680g.
- Purcell, Albert A., 104, 627
- R**adek, Karl, 173, 632
- Rakovsky, Christian, 18, 486, 631, 681g
- Ramloff, Billie, 577
- Ray, George, 279, 296, 311, 320, 681g
- Red Army (Soviet Union), 6, 71-72, 421-28, 435-36, 438, 440-48, 490-91, 501, 510, 558-59, 562
- Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern, RILU), 567, 681g

- Reiss, Ignace, 26
- Reorganized United Mine Workers (RUMW), 63–64, 66, 681g. *See also* United Mine Workers
- Resident committee, CLA, 46, 76, 155, 184, 186, 249, 283, 316, 403, 416, 418, 452, 499, 648; Abern's removal from, 59, 472, 482, 497, 644; composition of, 76, 192–93, 243, 257, 355, 458, 608, 644. *See also* Communist League of America; National Committee
- Revolutionary Socialist Party, Holland (RSP), 13, 73
- Ridley, F.A., 143, 631
- Right Opposition (RO), 14–17, 19, 79, 89, 232, 348, 611, 620, 644; Trotsky on, 16–17, 52, 88–89, 105, 219, 627. *See also* Communist Party (Opposition); Lovestone; Winitsky
- RILU. *See* Red International of Labor Unions
- Ritz (CLA member), 413
- Rivera, Diego, 605, 647–48
- RO. *See* Right Opposition
- Roosevelt, Franklin D., 34, 40, 567
- Rose, S.M., 273
- Rosenthal, Gérard, 94, 681g
- Rosmer, Alfred, 13, 23–25, 117, 144, 176, 265, 285, 682g; and Jewish Group, 121, 128, 178; Shachtman on, 27–28, 99–100, 134, 288, 329, 342–44, 513, 549; Trotsky on, 92–96, 107, 118, 132, 224, 626; withdraws from Ligue Communiste, 20, 86, 111
- Roth (CLA member), 313, 369, 378
- RSP. *See* Revolutionary Socialist Party, Holland
- Rudas, László, 127, 629
- RUMW. *See* Reorganized United Mine Workers
- Russian Revolution, 11, 14, 18, 27, 31
- Ruthenberg, C.E., 52, 619, 649, 682g
- Ryazanov, David, 154, 156, 162–68, 276, 682g
- S**
- Sacco, Nicola, 10, 451
- Sacherow (CLA member), 412
- SAP. *See* Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
- Satir, Norman, 412–13, 589, 683g
- Saul, George, 358, 374, 389, 526, 528, 562, 640, 683g
- Schneiderman, William, 10
- Schalwalbe (CLA member), 411, 563
- Scottsboro case. *See* Black oppression in U.S.
- Second International, 15–16, 60, 73, 208, 683g. *See also* Social Democratic Party, Germany
- Sedov, Leon, 23–26, 89–90, 141, 146, 613, 630, 683g
- Sedova, Natalya, 552
- Seipold, Oskar, 83, 98, 646, 684g
- Senin, Adolf, 21, 26–27, 415, 613, 684g
- Shachtman faction, 1–5, 54, 72, 220, 306, 315, 334, 371, 458–62, 465, 472–76, 479, 483, 492, 507–08, 529, 534, 549, 562–63, 589, 597, 600; on Cannon, 7, 56–57, 187–96, 208–12, 224, 237–51, 260–65, 270–72, 274–75, 278–81, 298–306, 318–21, 323–25, 395–98, 408–11, 435–46, 500–03, 512, 522–28, 546, 559–61, 572–73; Cannon faction's view of, 55, 61, 74–75, 79–80, 326–40, 364–67, 397–402, 458–64, 475–76, 492–93, 510–11; on Carter group, 270–72, 290–91, 302–03, 320, 373, 376–77; on CLA 3rd conference date, 359–60, 386–90, 499–503, 586–88, 603; composition of, 4, 54, 61, 75–78, 195, 220, 229, 463, 480, 522, 546–48, 558, 571; on co-optations to NC, 293–95, 303–04, 321, 352–55, 378–82, 387; on Engels introduction, 275–81, 304, 313, 318, 322; on “gestation” of CLA, 50–52, 251–57, 304–05; on ILO disputes, 263–70, 301–02, 320, 376, 540–41; on June 1932 CLA plenum, 298–308, 319–22, 339, 374–75; and miners, 63, 381, 508–09, 640; on Swabeck, 67, 256, 260–63, 274–75, 278–81, 298–306, 318–19, 320–21, 354, 388; on Swabeck's European trip, 353, 355–57, 361–65, 367, 395, 406–08, 519, 550, 639; and trade-union work, 75, 419–20, 429–34, 446; on Trotsky's

- intervention in CLA, 499-507, 512, 518-28, 538-41, 550-51, 558, 570-80, 586-87; Trotsky's view of, 463, 467-71, 477-80, 488-89, 507-09, 520, 525, 529-32, 546-51; on youth, 60, 77, 270-72, 337
- Shachtman, Max, 1-6, 33, 71, 180-81, 187, 194, 212-13, 240, 247, 258, 411, 459-61, 466, 582, 684g; and 1939-40 faction fight, 4, 8, 74-80; and April 1930 ILO conference, 2, 85, 133; on black oppression, 43-44, 503-04, 518, 530, 541-42, 551, 578, 617; on Cannon, 3, 4, 37, 47, 48, 50, 59, 76, 160-61, 192, 229-30, 247-48, 324, 386, 389, 391-95, 572-73; on Cannon as national secretary, 395-402, 409; on Cannon's personal crisis, 36, 50, 238-51; and CLA dispute on international questions, 28-29, 144-45, 169, 171, 174, 182-83, 188-89, 236-37, 263-70, 299-302, 308-11, 317-20, 326-35, 376, 458, 632, 633; and CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 568, 574-77, 584-90, 594-98, 601; cliquism of, 54-55, 218-19, 220; on co-optations to NC, 352-55, 387, 528, 573; on Engels introduction, 160-68; in England, 29, 119, 133-34, 136-38, 143, 145; and ILO, 27-28, 30, 124-26, 135-36, 147-48, 220-22, 224-30, 263-70, 287-89, 325-26, 366, 507, 540-41, 549, 558, 631; and ILO International Bureau, 2, 28, 49, 89-91, 102, 133-38, 144-46; on ILO International Secretariat, 110-11, 124-26; at ILO May 1933 plenum, 534, 543-44; at June 1932 CLA plenum, 283, 287-95; on labor party, 39-40; and Ligue Communiste de France, 3, 20, 28, 79, 98-100, 106-07, 123, 125-34, 140, 142-43, 188-89, 218-19, 227-30, 288-89, 634; and *Militant*, 37, 46, 76, 144, 147, 149, 170, 190, 193, 211, 225, 295, 298, 301, 305-06, 309, 317, 322, 325, 331, 405, 462, 577-78, 640; and miners, 67-68, 429-34, 446, 452, 496-98, 506-08, 512-13, 516-18, 529-32, 539, 552-55, 562, 576, 578, 639, 640; and *Opposición Comunista de España*, 53-54, 79, 121-24, 177, 226, 228, 289, 341-45, 614; and Red Army dispute, 435-48; on Swabeck, 58, 168, 229-30, 533, 544, 570-73; and trade-union work, 366-67, 639, 640; and Trotsky visit (1930), 2, 27, 38, 42, 45, 64, 85, 148, 170-71, 196-97, 247, 624; and Trotsky visit (1933), 54, 536, 543-56, 570-71, 594, 595, 599; and United Opposition of Germany, 27, 79, 100-02, 106, 109-10, 112-16, 134, 140, 218-19, 226-27, 229, 288; votes in resident committee, 56, 59, 155, 174, 177, 184, 326, 349, 402, 416, 424, 474, 495, 496, 637, 640, 641, 643-44, 648. *See also* Communist League of America; Shachtman faction; Socialist Workers Party
- Shliapnikov, Aleksandr Gavrilovich, 481, 684g
- Shulman, Philip, 382, 563, 587
- Sifakis, James, 208, 685g
- Skoglund, Carl, 4, 11, 45, 185-86, 245, 282, 295, 300, 305, 324, 382, 492, 571, 614, 685g; on coal drivers, 62, 206-207, 216-218. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
- SLP. *See* Socialist Labor Party
- Šmeral, Bohumír, 127, 629
- Sneevliet, Henricus, 12-13, 685g
- Sobolevicius. *See* Senin, Adolf; Well, Roman
- Social Democracy. *See* Second International
- Social Democratic Party, Germany (SPD), 22, 71-72, 154, 161-62, 167, 632
- Socialist Labor Party (SLP), 156, 163, 166, 276-77, 625, 686g
- Socialist Party (SP), 1, 4, 10-12, 30, 34, 40, 65-66, 74, 381, 430-32, 555, 561, 565, 567, 635, 642
- Socialist Workers Party (SWP), 1-5, 13, 58, 74-79, 617, 686g
- Souvarine, Boris, 22-23, 96, 288, 686g
- Souzo. *See* Leonetti, Alfonso

- Soviet Union. *See* Left Opposition (Soviet Union); New Economic Policy; Red Army; Right Opposition; Stalin; Trotsky
- Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAP), 73, 686g
- SP. *See* Socialist Party
- Spanish Revolution, 19, 22, 29, 48, 105, 284, 611
- Spartacus Youth Clubs (SYC), 48, 205, 391, 537, 641, 651, 686g. *See also* Communist League of America; *Young Spartacus*
- SPD. *See* Social Democratic Party, Germany
- Spector, Maurice, 9, 12, 46–47, 76, 91, 144, 190–92, 195, 251, 294–95, 462, 571, 614, 687g; and Cannon, 36, 221, 239–40, 249, 255, 369–70, 518; Cannon faction's view of, 220, 464; and ILO disputes, 179, 188, 224, 236, 280, 283–87, 299, 302, 320, 333, 631; and Shachtman faction, 3, 54, 220–22, 229, 236, 304, 367–70, 458, 512, 550, 564; and Toronto CLA branch, 200–01, 272, 296–98, 304, 313, 322, 367–69, 378, 385, 464, 634, 636–37. *See also* Shachtman faction
- Stalin, Joseph, 9, 13–17, 27, 30–31, 41, 45, 51, 99, 110, 114, 129, 134, 157, 210–11, 219, 247, 252, 254, 255, 284, 370, 406, 548, 610, 630
- Stalinists: disruption of Trotskyist movement by, 26–27, 32, 83, 612, 613, 646
- Stamm, Tom, 5, 61, 280, 282, 358, 363, 403–04, 536–38, 557–58, 563, 570, 574, 579, 584, 687g. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
- Stein, Morris. *See* Lewit, Morris
- Sterling, Max, 358, 562, 642, 687g
- Stone (CLA member), 296, 311, 320
- Swabeck, Arne, 4–5, 10, 48, 170, 188–89, 194, 196, 299–300, 328, 335, 349, 353, 379, 404, 533, 547, 582–83, 594, 606, 614, 618–19, 687g; on black oppression, 42–43, 503; on Cannon, 36, 49, 190, 193, 195, 246–47, 392, 571; on Cannon as national secretary, 59, 392–93, 397–402, 408–10; on Cannon's 1929 absence from office, 36, 190, 243–44; on CLA 3rd conference date, 462, 476, 485, 504–06, 510, 603–05; on CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 475, 483–85, 589, 598, 600–03; as CLA national secretary, 28–29, 34, 47, 49, 53–54, 71, 110, 139, 193, 210, 222, 354, 405, 413, 600–05, 651; on co-optations to NC, 352–54, 458, 463–64, 466, 474, 544; on Engels introduction, 60–61, 153–69, 180–82, 208, 313, 318, 331, 374, 458; in Europe, 455, 478–79, 530–35, 541, 544–46; European trip, dispute over, 58–59, 353–57, 361–68, 384, 395, 406–08, 477–78, 488, 496, 503, 519, 550, 639; on Glotzer's tour report, 212–16; at June 1932 CLA plenum, 282–83, 286–87, 291–92, 296–298; on labor party, 38; and miners, 33, 63, 360, 381, 410, 498, 507, 509, 510, 562, 585, 640; moves to New York, 46, 49, 193, 213; and Shachtman, 532–33, 544; Shachtman faction on, 67, 76, 184–85, 187, 193–94, 209, 236, 242–48, 260–63, 270–72, 298–306, 318–19, 320–21, 324–25, 352, 370, 388, 414, 558–62, 570–73; Trotsky's discussions with (1933), 6, 58, 70, 78, 456–67, 472–77, 479–86, 492, 503, 541, 546, 549–50, 558–59, 570–71, 573, 599; votes on resident committee, 56, 155, 309, 349, 402; and weekly *Militant*, 45–47, 191, 195, 245–47. *See also* Cannon faction in CLA
- SYC. *See* Spartacus Youth Clubs
- T**eamsters Union, 1, 3, 62, 622
- Third International. *See* Communist International
- Third Period, 15, 31–32, 41, 44, 53, 62, 63, 66, 72, 367, 429, 460, 476, 629, 688g
- Thomas, Norman, 34, 430

- Tomsky, Mikhail Pavlovich, 15, 104, 485, 627, 688g
- Townley, A.C., 205-06, 635
- Trachtenberg, Alexander L., 154, 163, 631-32, 688g
- Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), 433, 449, 688g
- Treint, Albert, 25, 121, 128-30, 139, 224, 227, 229, 285, 288, 629, 688g
- Tresso, Pietro (Blasco), 22, 548, 689g
- Trotsky, Leon, 27, 161-63, 166-68, 191, 205, 209-11, 249, 276, 444, 562, 609; and 1939-40 faction fight, 4, 78-80; on April 1930 ILO conference, 27-28, 83-87, 133; and black oppression in U.S., 41-43, 503-04, 530, 542; on call for new (Fourth) international, 72-73, 519, 552, 555, 581, 583-84, 588; and Cannon, 4, 8, 9, 46, 59, 70-71; on Chinese Eastern Railroad, 12, 18-19, 439; on CLA 3rd conference date, 465-66, 469-71, 482, 488, 504-08, 598-600; on CLA Cannon faction, 7-8, 62, 463-74, 480-84, 508, 523-25, 547-49, 572; CLA, donations to, 47, 116, 134-35, 624, 628, 630; on CLA headquarters move to Chicago, 473, 555-56, 568-69, 574-77, 598-600; on CLA publications, 48, 89-90, 103, 114, 117; on CLA's role in ILO, 133, 135-36, 266, 308-11, 317, 365; on Communist International, 9-10, 14-17, 37-38, 51, 468; on co-optations to CLA NC, 465-67, 473; in Copenhagen (1932), 58, 353, 361-64, 406-07, 460, 487, 552; on Eastman, 105, 610, 627; on fascism in Germany, 72, 424, 442, 489-91, 647; on Field, 70-71, 345-48, 579-80; on French trade-union dispute, 20, 92-94, 104-05, 121, 264, 529-30, 611, 626; on Gillespie trade-union conference, 68, 508-09, 538-39; and Glotzer, 142-44, 148, 187-88, 195-96, 224, 479, 556, 634; and ILO founding, 1-2, 22-23, 607; on ILO intervention in CLA, 467-71, 486, 500, 507-09, 529, 540, 548-50; on ILO secretariat, 23-27, 86-89, 119-20, 174, 289; on Jewish Group (France), 121-22, 290-91; on labor party in U.S., 37-40, 196-97, 219, 222, 226, 230, 637; on Landau, 21-22, 28-29, 97-98, 103-05, 108, 114-16, 118, 134, 626; and *Militant*, 46, 118, 149, 295, 322, 325, 577; on Mill, 25, 132, 133-34; on miners, 64, 68, 508-09, 529-30, 553-55, 564, 575, 585, 591-93; on Molinier, 92, 94, 132, 224-25; on Naville, 2, 29, 92-98, 104-05, 109, 115-18, 131-34, 280, 626; on Nin, 19, 105, 341, 541, 611, 646; on Prometeo, 22, 84, 88; on Red Army, 72, 448, 489-91; on Right Opposition, 16-17, 52, 88-89, 105, 219, 627; on Rosmer, 23, 92-96, 118, 132, 134; and Shachtman, 79-80, 139-40, 149, 170, 225-30, 325-26; on Shachtman faction, 463, 467-71, 477-80, 488-89, 507-09, 525, 529-32, 546-51; on Shachtman in ILO, 2-3, 6, 27-30, 114-18, 132-41, 147, 218-19, 224-25, 325-26, 328-30, 333-34, 505, 507, 529, 549-50, 558, 614, 631; Shachtman's discussions with (1930), 27-28, 46, 64, 170-71, 250, 363; Shachtman's discussions with (1933), 544-51, 553-56, 570-80; on Shachtman's opposition to Swabeck trip, 477-78, 488; on Swabeck, 486, 549, 598-99, 606; Swabeck's discussions with (1933), 6, 456-67, 472-77, 479-86, 492, 503, 541, 546, 549, 550, 558-59, 571, 573, 599, 617; on Weisbord, 70, 115, 140, 222-24, 345-49, 351, 359, 606, 651. *See also* International Left Opposition; Left Opposition (Soviet Union)
- Trotskyist Opposition. *See* International Left Opposition; Left Opposition (Soviet Union)
- Trotskyists. *See* Communist League of America; Fourth International; International Left Opposition; Left Opposition (Soviet Union); Socialist Workers Party

TUUL. *See* Trade Union Unity League

UMW. *See* United Mine Workers

Unemployed Councils, 689g. *See also* Communist Party, United States

Union Communiste, 73

United Mine Workers (UMW), 33, 62–66, 513, 515, 552, 689g. *See also* Progressive Miners of America; Reorganized United Mine Workers

United Opposition of Germany, 18, 20–21, 23, 26, 58, 83, 124, 175, 415, 445, 489–90, 511, 612, 626–27, 645–46, 648; and call for new party, 72–73, 519, 546; Landau's leadership of, 20–22, 27–29, 97–98, 100–03, 106, 265–66, 285, 613; and Shachtman, 27–29, 108–10, 112–15, 134, 140, 218–19, 229, 269, 288, 329, 334, 633. *See also* *Kommunist, Der*

United Opposition (Soviet Union), 2, 9, 12, 14, 113, 690g

Unser Kampf, 47–48, 62, 78, 173, 187, 195, 198–202, 204, 207, 213, 215, 234, 258, 261–62, 273, 280, 318, 384–85, 405, 579, 618, 690g

Unser Wort, 511, 519, 690g

Urbahns, Hugo, 12, 18, 23, 52, 84–85, 98, 177, 179, 244, 255, 288, 344, 439, 690g

Vanguard, 378

Vanzetti, Bartolomeo, 10, 451

Vanzler, Joseph, 573, 690g

Vereeken, Georges, 19, 26, 613

Vérité, La, 20, 24, 28, 89, 93, 95, 114, 117, 133, 626

Votaw (CLA member), 512

Walker, John A., 203, 429, 690g

War, struggle against. *See* Amsterdam Congress

Weber, Jack, 358, 388, 416, 562, 571, 572, 598, 641, 642, 690g

Weber, Sara, 486, 499–500, 529, 599, 606, 645, 647, 690g

Weiner, S., 563

Weinstone, William, 240, 691g

Weisbord, Albert, 111–12, 115, 140, 180, 196, 211, 233, 251, 298, 369, 389, 466, 564, 606, 691g; negotiates with CLA, 345–46, 348–52, 358–59, 496–97, 651; supporters of, in New York CLA branch, 48–49, 53, 273, 338, 382, 460–61, 526; visits Trotsky, 70, 222–24, 345–46. *See also* Communist League of Struggle

Well, Roman, 21, 26–27, 98, 106, 108, 112–13, 415, 445, 613, 691g

Wicks, Harry, 428, 435, 437–39, 691g

Winitzky, Harry, 85, 89, 641

Witte, 73, 478–79, 534, 543, 613, 691g

Workers and Peasants Bloc (BOC), 19, 53, 610, 611

Workers Party of the United States (WPUS), 60, 74, 692g

Workmen's Circle, 204, 635, 649

World War I, 12, 40, 41, 73, 426, 441, 442

World War II, 13, 16, 27, 74

WPUS. *See* Workers Party of the United States

Wright, John G. *See* Vanzler, Joseph

YCL. *See* Young Communist League

Yolles (CLA member), 369

Young Communist League (YCL), 11, 32, 199, 201, 382, 386, 560, 614, 615

Young People's Socialist League–Fourth Internationalist (YPSL–4th), 77–78

Young Spartacus, 47–48, 77, 153, 157–58, 195, 198, 202, 213, 215, 234, 261–62, 273, 279, 313, 318, 618, 692g

YPSL–4th. *See* Young People's Socialist League–Fourth Internationalist

Zborowski, Mark, 26–27, 613

Zinoviev, Grigori Y., 2, 7–8, 12, 37, 51, 55, 99, 121, 129, 161, 167, 252, 255, 276, 427, 610, 637, 639, 692g

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The “dog days of the movement”—that’s how founding American Communist and Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon described the early 1930s. This book sheds new light on the history of Trotskyism, that is, authentic communism, by documenting the factional polarization that the Communist League of America (CLA) underwent during this period of stagnation.

The 1931-33 fight pitted Cannon and his supporters against the generally younger followers of Max Shachtman who were less experienced in workers struggle. The dispute presaged the defining 1939-40 split in American Trotskyism. In the later fight Shachtman, bowing to the anti-Communist hysteria that accompanied the Hitler-Stalin pact, rejected unconditional military defense of the world’s first workers state, the Soviet Union. Shachtman’s defection was the first step on the road that led him, by the early 1960s, to the open embrace of U.S. imperialism. Leon Trotsky and Cannon led the 1939-40 struggle against Shachtman and his followers.

In 1931-33 the fight erupted when Shachtman opposed Cannon’s attempt to put the CLA on record against trade-union opportunism in the French Trotskyist organization, and against the unprincipled maneuvers of the would-be German Trotskyist leader, Kurt Landau. During this time Trotsky sought to separate the genuine revolutionaries in the International Left Opposition (ILO) from ultraleftist, centrist, and cliquist elements, as well as Stalinist agents. As CLA representative to the ILO, Shachtman coddled many of Trotsky’s opponents. This book includes Trotsky’s powerful letters to Shachtman—some published for the first time—on formative political disputes in the French, German, and Spanish ILO sections.

Shachtman soon capitulated to Trotsky on the international issues, but the fight in the American Communist League escalated, fed by personal frictions and grievances going back to 1929. Subjects of dispute included Leninist methods of party organization, the potential role of the Soviet Red Army in a proletarian offensive to beat back Hitler’s ascension to power, and the CLA’s work in the Progressive Miners of America in southern Illinois. Documents from both sides of the factional divide appear here, including centrally “The Situation in the American Opposition: Prospect and Retrospect” by Shachtman, Martin Abern, and Albert Glotzer, which harps on many of the same organizational themes that obsessed the Shachtman side in the 1939-40 dispute and later.

Unlike 1939-40, there were no well-defined programmatic differences in the CLA. Trotsky intervened sharply in spring 1933 to end the destructive impasse, helping to lay the basis for the subsequent six years of collaboration between Cannon and Shachtman as the American Trotskyists took advantage of new opportunities for growth that began in 1933.

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