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Communist League of America (Opposition)

---Issued by the National Committee---

For Members Only

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I.

STATEMENT BY SHACHTMAN ON THE ARTICLE "UPHOLD OUR REVOLUTIONARY CLASSICS" BY SWABECK IN THE MILITANT OF MARCH 5, 1932.  
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I want to register a formal protest against the article "Uphold Our Revolutionary Classics" which appeared in the Militant of March 5, 1932 over the signature of comrade Arne Swabek, printed without authorization or even the promised preliminary consideration of the National or Editorial Committees. 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 Swabek'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 intelligence" 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 Lasalle by a non-member of the League, where I protested against the boudoir method of writing about the great socialist leaders (a protest in which all concurred) Swabek raised the question of Carter's article. Nobody spoke on it. No decision was adopted on it. Swabek announced that he would reply to it. That was all. In no sense was Swabek "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, Swabek 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. Swabek 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 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 a 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 ~~can~~ 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 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 ~~xxx~~ 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 ~~xxx~~ 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 Committee of the Youth, 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, Swabek 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 ~~time~~ to time, particularly when it was obviously unfounded. Comrades Cannon and Swabek, 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 upbringing 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 these 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 donot want to flatter (and thereby destroy) the youth; neither should we flatten them out with bludgeons.

It is with this attitude that Swabek, with Cannon's agreement, wrote and published his article. In the NC Swabek sought to excuse the article on the ground that Carter represented a "dangerous tendency" and was a "polished intrigant" generally. The motivation is remarkable. Is it to mean that since Carter is a scoundrel anyway, in general, so to speak, ~~xxxxxx~~ 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 Swabek'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~~ 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 organisation, on his own responsibility, without attributing it to others, and only under the acute provocations of Swabeck'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, Swabeck 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 Swabeck's.

Here too I do not feel ~~not~~ 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 ~~rather~~ another. And it is on the question of the essence of the matter that comrade Swabeck 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 authorised 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 Swabeck's article, I am certain that he had read neither Rosa's speech nor Engels' introduction, nor the polemics on the subject in pre-war and post-war Socialist movement. If I had the time and space here, I could demonstrate that Swabeck actually the question from opportunist (that is, Bernstein's) premises, regardless of the ridiculously "irrevolubinary" 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, "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 characterised so elegantly, by 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 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 ~~day~~ own day, of the conception which shares re-

~~down to our own day, of the conception which...~~  
sibility for what happened on August 4, 1914." (Report of the Foundation Congress of the KPD, Spartakusbund, page 22). 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, ~~with them~~ could make street revolutions and triumph in them." (Ibid page 23).

Thus, Rosa also declared that Engels had proclaimed the old tactics "outlived" and thereby was "only one short step" from "either the camp of the useless petty bourgeois intelligentsia or else into the foul pollution of the 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 ~~entirely~~ 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 Riazanov's revelations? Rosa, Lenin, Trotsky and the others were not aware of the "full text" of Engels' foreword found 7-8 years ago by Riazanov. He even writes: "Perhaps (that is, Carter) was unaware ~~with~~ of the fact that long ago evidence has been unearthed of how this introduction, when appearing in print by the Berlin Vorwaerts was miserably garbled by the German social democrats of the revisionist school, notably by Bernstein. The extent of this garbling became clear when Riazanov discovered the original Engels manuscript," etc. etc. (Militant, 3/5/32)

In the first place, if Carter/g was "unaware" of all this, then a responsible leading comrade who should be a teacher of the young comrades, ought to have him "aware" before cracking upon his skull in public and amid a shower of abuse. In the second place, Riazanov's revelations have nothing to do with the essence of the matter. All of Swabeck's incog-~~erent~~ erent, 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 of the Berlin party fathers were quaking with fear at the Junkers' attempt to adopt more stringent provisions against the socialist propaganda (1894-1895), Engels wrote a foreword to a series of old articles by Marx which were printed under the title "The Class Struggle in France, 1848-1850". So as not to infuriate the Junkers and drive them into ~~the~~ sharp measures, the party fathers in Berlin, including Liebknecht the elder and Bernstein, first printed Engels' foreword in the party paper, "Vorwaerts", but in such a distorted chopped up, bowdlerized form that the Marxian-revolutionary essence of the document was violated and, to use Engels' ~~comment~~ comment upon it later, "So dressed up that I appear as a peaceful worshipper of legality at all costs". I have never seen the "Vorwaerts" extract from Engels' introduction, anymore than Carter or Swabeck has seen it. We can get all get an idea of its distortion, however, by Engels' indignant observations and from the subsequent revisionist use which Bernstein

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 Re-Issue 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 laws which, under the circumstances, I had to consider." (Mar. 25, 1895) A week later he wrote Kautsky (April 1, 1895):

"To my astonishment I saw today printed in the Vorwaerts, without previous knowledge, an extract from my Introduction so dressed up that I appear as a peaceful worshipper quand-meme (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 ~~be~~ been based, not upon the Vorwaerts distortion, but upon the "whole" which Kautsky printed with Engels' authorisation and proof-corrections. And Riazonov's document? The deleted sections are obviously those which Engels himself had blue-pencilled. Neither Riazonov 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 Swaback 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 S. L. P. faithfully translated into English and very faithfully misinterprets in a revisionist sense) ~~did~~ advocates a change of tactics and nevertheless ~~did~~ remain a revolutionist. The foreword was not a "death-bed repentance from youthful revolutionary sins"---BUT THIS FACT WAS KNOWN TO MARXISTS BEFORE RIAZONOV'S DISCOVERY AND KNOWN TO THEM ON THE BASIS OF A DIALECTICAL UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE "NEUE ZEIT" PUBLICATION.

Swaback 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 Swaback 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, 1848-1850 all that could be of use to him to support the tactic of peacefulness and anti-violence 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~~ whole could not be followed, and for Germany, it might become inapplicable tomorrow."

Further, in that part of the introduction (first 18 pages) which Riazarov declares were not in any way changed, Engels writes categorically and simply enough for all to understand: "But history also proved us ~~wrong~~ 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~~ obsolete in every respect, and that is a point which right here deserves closer investigation." (English edition, page 17-18) And: "The rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which up to 1848 gave the final decision, has become antiquated." (Ibid page 29). Did this mean that Engels became a revisionist ala 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, guerilla 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" (page 35) 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~~ whole of it falls, the other party being no longer bound by it." (page 38).

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 '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 covenant in Germany, the Russia of semi-serfdom 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, April 10, 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 to the Provisional Government, April 27, 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 Riazanov, 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 Riazanov'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 definitively passed. Only the time of the old barricade tactic is passed. This was demonstrated by the battle of Moscow...' This 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, March 20, 1905)

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 prodigested 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, August 29, 1906.)

All these writings published, it should be borne in mind, on the basis, not of Vorwaerts' distortions of Engels' foreword, but of Kautsky's exposure of these distortions, i. e., on the basis of the "whole" document. Ten years before Riazanov, Lenin wrote, "When Engels' famous foreword to 'The Class Struggles in France' appeared, the attempt was made (among other places in the Vorwaerts) 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 worshipper of legality at all costs.'" (Lenin, The Dead Chauvinism and the Living Socialism, December 12, 1915.)

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, M. S. 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 co-fighter, had become, towards 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 remained 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 polemicalised 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 Struggle 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 showed 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

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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, from "1905", pages 202-4)

And finally, to get back to Rosa, let us quote from her polemic, written also long before she had the benefit of Riazanov'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 towards 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, Works, Vol. III, page 89)

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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 indorsed 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 defeat 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, that the charge that I have organized a faction against the National Committee (I) on the "worst possible basis", the youth, 3. From Cannon, a continuation of the underhanded insinuations that "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 potty-bourgeois intellectual, a writer, an American Naville, an American Landau. Now the song becomes a little louder and even less attractive. It is very clear that Cannon is aiming at, I knew 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.

March 12, 1932.

-----Max Shachtman

INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF THE COLLECTIVIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA (O.P.)

(Reply to "Statement by Schachtman on the article 'Uphold our Revolutionary Classics' by Swabeck in the Militant of Mar. 5, 1932").

Comrade Trotsky's remarks, in his circular letter of Dec. 22, 1931 about the general perspectives of the League--which coincide with what has been said on this subject in our Second Conference thesis, and in other articles and documents--ought to be supplemented at the present time by a consideration of the prospects of the more immediate future, as well as by an estimation of the specific part which our League as an organization may play in the further development of the American Communist movement.

The objective conditions of the moment, within which the great future possibilities of American Communism are slowly ripening; press very heavily upon the Opposition. The ideas are at work, thanks to our fairly good propagandistic activities, and there is no doubt that our cause is making silent gains in the ranks of the communist workers. But it appears to us most probable that the real chances for ~~such~~ rapid organizational growth will come only later, after the impact of great events has shaken the Party more profoundly. That such opportunities for the Opposition to advance in great leaps will present themselves, we can have no doubt. And in this connection a most important question presents itself: Will the nucleus which we have previously organized be prepared to meet the situation and take command of the party, or a substantial section of it? Or will it turn out that the ideas of the Opposition have to find their eventual organizational medium only after longer delays, by a more roundabout way and through some other door than ours?

The vindication and the victory of our ideas in time is assured. But this may take place in a drawn-out fashion and after much waste of time if our League falls short of its tasks. If it transpires that the present nucleus shall have exhausted itself in the preliminary propaganda tasks--the popularization of the fundamental ideas of the International Opposition--and shall have failed to raise the necessary cadres to carry them through, this will undoubtedly be the case. On the other hand, if we succeed in the time that is allotted to us in assembling and training a politically "hard" and genuinely revolutionary group, the rapid reconstruction of the Party--with our nucleus as its core--may be accomplished in a few decisive steps after the inevitable smash-up of Centrism.

This latter, in our opinion, ought to be our deliberate aim. From this point of view it is essential now to ~~submit~~ submit the present situation in the League to a thorough-going consideration and to examine the trend of development. 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

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 fundamental principles, 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 signalled 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 N.C.

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 in this answer was not a deception of the organisation, 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 realised. We have not been able to construe the conduct of comrade Shachtman since the Conference otherwise than as series of blows to the organisation. And finally, at the meeting of the NC held on March 15, 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 organisation is placed before a sit-

uation 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.

The ostensible basis for this attack, and the factional agitation in the New York branch inspired by it, is the publication in the Militant of March 5th of an article by comrade Swabeck which sharply condemns the interpretation of Engels' "Introduction to The Class Struggles in France" made by comrade Carter in Young Spartacus NO. 2. It is claimed that comrade Swabeck's contentions are incorrect, and strong objections are also made to the ~~harsh~~ harsh tones of his articles. But even if these allegations were well-founded--which we dispute--it is quite obvious that such an incident, by itself, is not and cannot be the real cause of the tumult. No grown-up communist will believe for a moment that a National Committee of more or less experienced people can be disrupted over night, for the sake of a remote historic dispute or an insult to a comrade. The situation can become comprehensible only if its real causes are laid bare. The muffled differences and half differences of the past, which have matured to the point where they upset the unity of the Committee, must be brought to light before the organization.

To place the discussion on this, its real, political basis, is the aim of the present statement. On this background the specific dispute in question, which has been seized upon as the pretext for the attack, can be assigned to its proper proportional place and discussed with the necessary objectivity. The dispute over comrade Swabeck's article, which, while it has a certain importance in itself, and will be discussed here at full length, will then be revealed in its real significance as an incident in a larger conflict--one that can no longer ~~be~~ be confined to the National Committee.

In order to bring the necessary clarity into the discussion, the first requirement is to put the disputed questions as they really are. 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--upon whose collaboration the practical work and direction of the League rested--there has been slowly, but steadily developing divergence over questions which we consider ~~xxx~~ decisive for the future of our movement. These questions are the following:

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 non-revolutionary and intellectualistic tendencies in the New York branch.

### THE INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS

In his document, referred to above, comrade Shachtman refers to the disagreements on the International questions in a most peculiar way. On the one hand, he accuses us of "tacking on the International questions" to other disputes arbitrarily. On the other hand, he charges us with "disloyalty" in mentioning the International differences. He writes: "Cannon has disloyally taken advantage of views I have expressed in letters to comrade Trotsky, etc." These arguments contain their refutation, both in fact and in principle. Moreover, they betray their ~~irreconcilable~~ irreconcilable difference between his approach to these questions and ours.

In the first place, our disputes with him began with the International questions, especially on the way of approaching and dealing with them, and could ~~in~~ not be "tacked on" to other disputes that did not exist in any clearly defined form. And, in the second place, we know of no obligation whatever to keep silent about the international questions, or to put them on one side as something abstract and entirely disconnected from the life of our League. If we have so far confined our discussions of them to the close circle of the leadership, and even more than that to personal conversations with comrade Shachtman, it was not because we considered them "cabinet" secrets, but only for the purpose of helping him to alter his course while there was yet time. If Cannon, with the full agreement of Swabeck, spoke at the National Conference on the concrete lessons of the fight against Landau--Neville--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 any right to speak openly, or because we wish to fith 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 organisation yielded absolutely no results. The breach, which we did not yet consider unbridgable at the conference, became wider and our League became further compromised in the International Opposition as a result of comrade Shachtman's conduct.

That is why we have come more sharply into conflict with him. It is necessary to speak out loud about it now. Comrade Shachtman will have no reason to complain of "insuations," nor of any indirectness whatever.

The evolution of our differences with comrade Shachtman on the International questions into the open conflict of the present moment has been recorded all along the line by a chain of facts which speak for themselves and leave no possibility of a doubt as to their meaning. The mere recital of those facts--which are clearly established--will show how futile are the assertions of comrade Shachtman that the present differences have been invented and "tacked on" in some ~~xx~~ kind of a "frame-up" against him.

We consider comrade Shachtman's approach to the functions of International representative of the League and his method of

conducting them just as false as the position he took on the struggles in the other sections. And we made our objections known to him, not once or twice, but many times, and not since yesterday, but for more than a year past.

On the side of methods: Comrade Shachtman conducted himself, as the International representative and correspondent of the League, in an irresponsible and purely personal way. In these affairs, which the deepest interest for the committee as a whole, he acted as an individual, not as the representative of the committee and responsible to it. He did not even find it necessary to make the information about the development of struggles in the European sections, which came to him by virtue of his office, available to the committee.

Incredible as it may seem to one who thinks in terms of organisation and collective work, especially in a committee that is presumably united in its policy, comrade Shachtman regarded the correspondence of comrade Trotsky, on matters relating to the most acute crises in the European sections, as a purely personal correspondence. He would convey the contents of these letters to the committee in snatches and brief extracts, or not at all, as he saw fit.

It was impossible for us to agree to such a procedure. We could not think of comrade Trotsky as an individual, passing his time in a purely individual political correspondence to America, when there is an organisation here, in harmony with his views, that attaches the greatest importance to every word he writes about the International Opposition. We tried to explain this point of view to comrade Shachtman, both in committee meetings, and in personal conversations, beginning more than a year ago, but without the slightest success.

We could understand comrade Trotsky writing especially to a minority of a national section, or even to a single individual, in cases where he found the committee against him--as in Germany in Landau's time--or ~~even~~ in cases where the committee itself was divided into factions and he found it necessary to intervene. But here was the committee of our League, united in its own policy, which had not taken issue with comrade Trotsky on any question and had not been criticised by him. Why then should his letters dealing with political questions such as the affairs in the French and German sections, be withheld from the committee? This is the point of view we tried to explain to comrade Shachtman--in the most patient ~~and~~ and friendly tone but none the less insistent way--but without the slightest success. Comrade Shachtman only became insulted, only considered our position an invasion of his "personal rights".

Comrade Shachtman's attitude, especially at the time when the struggle against Landau--Naville, etc. was becoming most acute and we were most eager to know more about it, forced us to consider the advisability of asking comrade Trotsky to address his political letters directly to the committee. We held back from this step, not because we were thinking of a "campaign" against Shachtman, but for precisely opposite reasons. We

~~had been found a solution would be found. We did not want to sharpen~~  
hoped that a solution would be found. We did not want to sharpen relations with him, and we did not wish to injure his standing with comrade Trotsky by the implication of a lack of confidence in him. This action was taken eventually by the committee on the motion of comrade Abern.

At the committee meeting of June 12, 1931, in connection with a discussion of the crisis in the German and French sections, the following motion was carried:

"That the Secretary (Swabeck) inform comrade Trotsky that he acts officially for the NEC and ask him to address official communications to the League in care of the Secretary."

Even then comrade Swabeck could bring himself to carry out the instruction. The letter was never sent, because he felt it would be a blow to comrade Shachtman and he hoped for a milder way out of the difficulty. These incidents speak very eloquently about the origin of the disputes.

On the position of comrade Shachtman on the International questions: It became gradually impressed upon us that our quarrel with comrade Shachtman over this method and procedure in the International questions was merging into a deffernace of position in regard to them. While we still had apparently "general" agreement, there was to be noted a decided difference in emphasis and definiteness. From the limited material at our disposal (comrade Shachtman was much better supplied) the general character of the Landau--Neville elements was clear enough to us and we favored a resolute struggle against them. Even without comrade Trotsky's illuminating open letters it was sufficient for us to read a couple of the translated of Landau, and to take note of his ambiguous and shifty tactics of Neville in his struggle against the leadership of the French League, to get a definite impression of these people. After all that we learned in the party struggle with elements of this type it was impossible for us to be in doubt as to our position. Comrade Shachtman--upon whom the experiences of the past left fewer traces--was less definite, less concrete, and, as we later learned, much less convinced.

We got a cheap reminder of the way things were drifting and of the way they were being taken abroad, by the arrival of a letter from comrade Trotsky in which he criticised our National Committee for its delay in acting against Landau and held us partly responsible for Landau's actions. If Landau had known that he could not count on the support of our section among others, said comrade Trotsky, he might not have gone so far in his criminal course as bring the German section to the split. We did not feel that his criticism properly belonged to the committee, for we had not been put ~~any~~ on guard. We made no protest against the criticism--perfectly correct in itself but sent to the wrong address by mistake--but we ~~begin~~ began to look into things more closely.

We saw that the resolution on the situation in the International Opposition, which comrade Shachtman had been assigned

which comrade Shachtman had been assigned to write at the meeting of June 12, with definite instructions as to its contents, was delayed from week to week. It was not ready until more than two months later, on the eve of the conference, and it was lacking in that quality of definiteness which we began to insist on more and more. It condemned Landau--who had already split from the International Opposition--but it avoided mention of Neville who was remaining inside the French League for reasons of factional strategy. The specific condemnation of Neville, which appeared in the resolution when it was published in the Militant, was written into the document on the linotypers box by comrade Cannon.

The common resolution on the situation in the International Opposition began to seem like another of these worthless agreements in "general" which concealed real differences. Comrade Shachtman's international report at the conference was simply a factual chronicle of what had happened. The lessons of the struggle as they applied particularly to that part of the process which remained unfinished, were left out of account altogether. It was this circumstance--coming after all that had gone before--that called forth comrade Cannon's speech at the conference. Comrade Shachtman has referred to that speech as "insuation filled", and as marking the height of a "campaign" against him. He is quite mistaken. It was a warning to quit trifling with the problems of the European sections and join us in a common fight on the side of the revolutionary elements.

We didn't know then, as clearly as we know now, how much actual support he had given to the elements of disintegration in the International Opposition. We only began to realize that the differences were deeper than we had thought, and to fear that the actions of comrade Shachtman were not entirely accidental.

#### THE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PROBLEMS OF THE NEW YORK BRANCH

Comrade Shachtman's rather ambiguous role on the international questions had its counterpart in his attitude toward the New York Branch. Here also the differences with him grew slowly and gradually, and appeared to consist of differences in shading and emphasis. For a long time they were not clearly defined; and, in such circumstances, it would have been futile to think of any open conflict around them. We had a more or less "general agreement" on these problems, and as in the case of the international disputes, were in no hurry to expand the differences into open conflict.

We had fought together against Weisbord and other oppositional movements, and these struggles exerted a certain unifying influence. But in the conflicts with ~~the Carter~~ the Carter grouping we had less agreement. As subsequent events, and the present disruption of the committees in particular have shown, our apprehensions as to the significance of the first--apparently slight disagreement--was not unfounded.

The characteristic of this grouping--as we estimate it--is pedantic sterility and scholasticism combined with incapacity

to judge the actual questions politically. Comrade Shachtman speaks of comrade Carter's criticisms as "frequently exaggerated and petty". And in addition to that it is politically false. This grouping acts as a medium through which the propaganda of our political enemies, including their slander, filters into the Opposition in a moderate form. Carter gave partial support to Weisbord, and as a rule he has selected the acutest moments of our fight with pronouncedly false tendencies to sharpen his attacks on the National Committee. This grouping lacks many things, but its chief shortcomings is the lack of Communist proletarian spirit.

We have conceived it as a duty to liberate the branch from this influence by a straight-out, systematic and unyielding political struggle. Comrade Shachtman went with us part of the way. "In general" we were agreed. But when it came time to clinch the point in a given dispute with this grouping, and to extract a lesson from it, so that the same thing would not have to be gone over again, comrade Shachtman would draw back. This, as always, only muddled things. The real values of the discussion were lost, and they had to be repeated continually.

What these unformulated differences between us and comrade Shachtman really signified was intimated rather sharply at the branch meeting prior to the National Conference. After weeks of discussion in the branch, marked by false political criticisms and attacks on the National Committee, the local executive committee brought in a "unanimous" resolution, agreeable both to the Carter group and the alleged supporters of the NC. We rose in opposition to such an unprincipled conclusion to the discussion, which left everything just where it was before, and demanded a clear resolution one way or the other. With this design comrade Cannon introduced a resolution specifically supporting the NC and rejecting the criticism of Carter. This reopened a discussion which showed conclusively that there was not real agreement.

Comrade Shachtman sat silent during this discussion and did not vote on either of the resolutions. Other "supporters" of the NC, closest to comrade Shachtman, concentrated their on our resolution.

These were disturbing signs. And though they did not seem to us of enough importance to break up our general solidarity they contained a warning of future conflicts. This warning sounded louder on the last day of the Conference when comrade Shachtman insisted on adding to the NC 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.

The overwhelming defeat of this proposal by the Conference did not in any way serve to convince comrade Shachtman that he had misjudged the attitude of the organisation. And least of all did it suggest to him the idea of respecting that attitude. He appeared to take the matter as a personal affront, from which he has not yet recovered.

This affair threw a spirit of gloom over the closing hours of the conference. The irresponsible and politically incorrect action of comrade Shachtman--from which all the Committee members had tried to dissuade him--gave new encouragement to the Carter group. They began to "speculate" more actively on divisions in the National Committee--which Carter had repeatedly hinted at in the branch discussion without any rebuke from comrade Shachtman--which would facilitate oppositional movement. The members began to be apprehensive of coming conflicts, the reason for which was not entirely clear to them.

This unsettled feeling in the organization has been directly fostered by the whole course of comrade Shachtman since the Conference. The mere listing of his irresponsible acts since the Conference give convincing proof of this. These actions have led him straight, step by step, to his present position.

1) Immediately after the Conference he demanded a two months' vacation. Assenting to his proposal, we tried to prevail on him to delay it for a short time so that it would not appear to the membership as a reaction to the Conference disputes and cause further uneasiness among them. All these arguments were wasted. Comrade Shachtman would not listen, and insisted on his point.

2) He elected to go to Europe on his vacation. Much as we opposed the idea of international relations being caricatured by individuals touring from one country to another on personal responsibility, we did not raise objections to this kind of a vacation.

3) While on his European tour, Comrade Shachtman interested himself in the acutest conflicts on the European sections, passed judgments and took sides in them, without so much as sending the National Committee a single word of information. We had to hear from comrade Trotsky himself, in an indignant letter of protest against the conduct of comrade Shachtman in Europe and the false appraisal he had made of the disputes.

4) Following the return of comrade Shachtman and the receipt of comrade Trotsky's letter, the National Committee held a meeting to act on the proposal of comrade Trotsky. He had asked the Committee to say whether the views and acts of comrade Shachtman in international affairs were his own personal views and acts, or were representative of the Committee's opinion. To that the Committee could only reply that it had not even known of the views formulated by comrade Shachtman in Europe and that it could not take any responsibility for them. This statement was formulated in a very moderate resolution which did not condemn comrade Shachtman but only deferred its final judgment on the questions, pending the receipt of more detailed material. The discussion was conducted in a moderate and friendly tone and comrade Shachtman was elected by unanimous vote to resume his work as editor of the Militant. This comrade Shachtman refused to do.

5) On top of all this we now find comrade Shachtman coming out against us, in alliance with an oppositional grouping which obstructs the political education and development of the New York branch, and hurling at us a document which proclaims the end of collaboration with us.

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In the light of the foregoing, comrade Shachtman's document, which would be otherwise absolutely inexplicable, can be analyzed, and its real meaning demonstrated. From the foregoing it will be quite clear that comrade Shachtman has not composed such a document merely for the purpose of "correcting" a misunderstanding of Engels' "Introduction" on the part of comrade Swabeck, nor for the purpose of protecting a member of the organization from injustice and insult. No, comrade Shachtman has drawn up his document as a protest against our insistence on a firm and unambiguous position on the "international questions", and as a demonstration of solidarity with an oppositional faction in the New York Branch which is false in its political criticisms and permeated with a spirit that is out of place in a really serious proletarian organization.

And to do this he has been obliged to resort to a polemical method which is foreign to the Bolshevik method of putting questions squarely and discussing them honestly. He had to spin a web of specious argumentations in which he himself got hopelessly entangled. This document, designed to discredit us, gives in fact the appearance of a terrific self-revelation. It can only bring us nearer to the conclusion which flows from what went before it: his half-support of Landau-Naville, his present support of the Mill-Felix group in France against the leadership of the French League, his growing antagonisms to us and his corresponding solidarity with the Carter group and others whose political ~~orientation~~ orientation consists primarily of opposition to us--all these events have a certain connection and have not happened by chance.

### THE DISPUTE OVER ENGELS' "INTRODUCTION"

Comrade Swabeck's article was written in reply to statements in the article of comrade Carter regarding the position taken by Engels in his introduction to Marx's "Class Struggles in France". Were these statements true or false? Did they serve a revolutionary or a reactionary cause? These are the real questions at issue as we see it. But comrade Shachtman, in his defense of comrade Carter and his attack on comrade Swabeck twists away from this issue at the beginning of his polemic and does not return to it in any direct way. He has space for pages of quotations, but he does not once quote the statements of Carter which comrade Swabeck answered. To restore the discussion on this question to its real basis we must begin with this quotation.

Comrade Carter wrote: "Rosa (Luxemburg), in her inaugural address, again investigated the new problems brought forth by the conditions of the war and post-war period. She re-examined the teaching 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--8, but later proclaimed by Engels as outlived. (Introduction to the Class Struggles in France--Marx.) (Our emphasis.)"

This statement is not true. Thrown into an agitational article to be read by unschooled young workers it could only mislead them in regard to Engels' teachings. As it stands it is a slander against Engels which serves the reformists, and in this country particularly

the Socialist Labor Party which preaches legalism on the "authority" of Engels. "The tactic advocated by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto" is the tactic of "the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." Engels never proclaimed this tactic "outlived", he never said that "the teachings of Marx and Engels on the questions of armed insurrection, guerilla warfare, force and violence" were "outlived". It was the revisionists who perfidiously ascribed this renunciation to him, utilizing the published version of his "Introduction to Marx's 'Class Struggles in France'", out of which they had blue-pencilled the most direct and striking revolutionary passages as their authority. In this country the S. L. P. printed this mutilated work of Engels under a misleading title, with a preface which falsely claims the authority of Engels for their program of legalism.

• It is this principle issue between reformists and revolutionists that comrade Swabock had in mind when he attacked and refuted the statements in Carter's article which misrepresents Engels and helps the reformists. We cannot allow such a statement to stand unchallenged in our press, and the proper place to refute it was in the official organ of the League.

Here is what the Socialist Labor Party says in the preface to the paper edition of the "Introduction": "But here comes Engels--Marx's life-long co-worker--and who is more fit to interpret Marxism than he--showing by facts and figures that the day of the barricade, of street-corner revolution, of military action against the capitalist military forces, was a thing of the past already in the last half of the nineteenth century."

Comrade Carter's assertion only paraphrases the ~~assertion~~ words of the S. L. P. True enough, he does not draw their conclusions, and comrade Swabock never accused him of that. But he concedes their premise, repeats in almost the same words what they say about the position of Engels, and thereby grants them the right to refer to Engels as their authority. Comrade Swabock's article disputed this "concession" to the treacherous legalists of the S. L. P. And that was right and necessary, for the heritage of Engels belongs exclusively to us. The revisionists have no claim on his authority.

As is known, the revolutionary Marxists always maintained this in the pre-war period, even before the original manuscript of the "Introduction" was discovered in the archives of the German social democracy and brought to life by Riazanov. But in this struggle against the revisionists who claim the authority of Engels they were handicapped by the one-sided emphasis on legal methods in the published version of the Introduction and by certain statements in it which, without the qualifying and complementary clauses in the original, gave ground for confusion and misunderstanding. They had to rely on a Marxist interpretation of the document, on the scattered references to the state as a "covenant" which was not binding on the people if the rulers break it, on the remark that "the right of revolution is, in the last analysis, the only real ~~right~~ 'historic right'", and on the Engels letters of protest against the attempt to paint him as a "pacifist worshipper of legality at all costs."

The revisionists of the time--as now the S. L. P. --took full advantage of the one-sided emphasis on legal methods in the "edited"

Introduction, and Bernstein, as Riazanov points out, attempted to "cut it off, after Engels' death, which occurred a few months later, as a political testament repudiating the revolutionary past of himself and Marx. With what success this treacherous, this treacherous game played with Engels' Introduction is revealed most pointedly by Rosa Luxemburg in her speech at the founding Congress of the German Communist Party. She said: "Two important conclusions were drawn from this reasoning. In the first place the parliamentary struggle was counterposed to direct revolutionary action by the proletariat and the former was indicated as the only practical way of carrying on the class struggle. Parliamentarism did nothing but parliamentarism was the logical sequel of the criticism." And further: "Therefore the tactics expounded by Engels in 1895 guided the German social democracy in everything they did and in everything they left undone, down to the appropriate finish of August 4, 1914."

The deletion of some of the most vital sections of the original document, so far from having no significance--as the S. L. P. and after it comrades Shachtman and Carter maintain--greatly facilitate the colossal deception of the masses undertaken by the revisionists. Kautsky, according to Riazanov, knew that the published version differed significantly from the original, and he wrote, that if the revolutionary viewpoint (Weltanschauung) of Engels does not manifest itself with the necessary clarity and decisiveness, then "It is not he who bears the guilt, but his German friends, who forced him to dispense with the conclusion, because it is too revolutionary. They believed that the introduction spoke clearly enough without that. However, as Figura (?) has shown, this is not the case."

In their pamphlet "Who are the Revisionists?" the S. L. P. writes it says: "The alleged omissions (which they carefully refrain from quoting) do not serve the Communist (Communist) purpose at all...but that is neither here nor there and has nothing to do with the case." Comrade Carter in his statement to the National Youth Committee on March 5, argues: "The Socialist Labor Party replied to Trachtenberg (who quoted the deleted sections from Riazanov). I have not been able to find a comeback in any of the Communist publications." And comrade Shachtman, pressing harder along the same line, adds: "The whole introduction, unabridged, uncut, undistorted, was printed by Kautsky."

But Kautsky himself had a different opinion. He thought then, as we think now, that the claims of the revisionists could be fought more effectively if the original document were published. Whereupon, says Riazanov, Kautsky made the following proposal to Bernstein:

"Bernstein is in possession of the manuscripts left by our master. If the manuscript of the introduction should be among them, together with the omitted conclusion, then I demand that he publish the conclusion, which Engels omitted for external considerations and not because of inner reflections. That will prove distinctly what little cause Bernstein had to take recourse to Engels."

But, says Riazanov, Bernstein did not react to this challenge. And that did not stop him from stubbornly repeating, in all the late editions of his book the contention that the renunciation of revolutionary action was the last testament of Engels.

In the light of these facts appears the enormous value to the revolutionists of Riazanov's discovery of the original manuscript. It does away with the confusion as to Engels' active position at the time

and makes his meaning crystal clear, not only to educated Marxists, but to anyone who wants to know the truth. From the original manuscript one can prove, not by interpretation only, but by Engels' own direct words, that he never renounced an iota of his revolutionary views, to say nothing of proclaiming them "outlived". If he said--in the published version--that "the published fighting methods of 1848 are today obsolete in every respect", he outlines--in the suppressed sections--other fighting methods no less forceful and no less revolutionary. If he remarks--in the published introduction--that "the rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which, up to 1848, gave the final decision, has become antiquated", he leaves no room for doubt in the original manuscript, that he means only "the old style" and the old form and not rebellions and street-fights as such. Now wonder the revisionists concealed the original document! It was necessary for their purpose. A few quotations will suffice to show what the deletions signified:

The published version said in (Page 21 of the S. L. P. edition, Page 31 in the ~~paper~~ paper version): "Therefore, even during the classic period of street battles, the barricade had a moral rather than a material effect. It was a means to shake the solidity of the military. If it held until that had been accomplished, the victory was ~~ensured~~; if not, it meant defeat." There they stop. The following is left out: "This is the point of view to be borne in mind even in an investigation of the prospects of the future street battles."

We have here in Engels' own words, as Riazanov comments, "Not a renunciation of street battles nor even of barricades, but ultimately of a more diligent evaluation of the chances for them."

Another quotation (Page 23 of the S. L. P. edition, Page 33 of the paper volume) with the deleted sections underscored: "And finally, the newly built quarters of the large cities, erected since 1848 have been made out in long, straight and wide streets as though made to order for the effective use of the new cannon and rifles. The revolutionary, who would himself select the new working class districts in the north and east of Berlin for a barricade battle, would have to be a lunatic. 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 battles will therefore be far less usual in the earlier stages of a great revolution than in its later course, and will have to be fought with greater resources of strength. Such battles will rather resort--as in the great French Revolution, and on 23 September 4 and October 31, 1870, in Paris--to open attack than to the defensive tactics of the barricades."

What basis is there whatever, in the face of these words of Engels, for the S. L. P. to represent him as showing that "military action against the capitalist forces was a thing of the past already in the last half of the nineteenth century," or for Comrade Carter to limp after them and, without weighing his words or thinking what he was doing, to corroborate their false contention with the no less false assertion that Engels proclaimed the tactic which he and Marx had advocated in the Communist Manifesto "outlived"? How much

the observation of the Marxist scholar, Riazanov: "THESE WORDS OF ENGELS APPEAR TO ONE LIKE A PROPHECY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION!"

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 S. L. P. "proves" that Engels made the excisions: "from which" says the S. L. P. "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." Shachtman and Carter press this deduction very insistently, as though they are "scoring a point" thereby against comrade Swaback, 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 S. L. P.'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.

One can understand why the S. L. P. is so anxious to prove that Engels made the deletions of his own accord. But why should comrades Shachtman and Carter be so positive and insistent? They don't know any more about it than we do. Riazanov is a man of great prestige among revolutionists. Comrade Trotsky in a recent article spoke of his "incomparable Marxist erudition" and also emphasized his exceptional conscientiousness, particularly in matters of historic facts concerning our heritage. In his article in "Unter dem Banner des Marxismus" No. 1 he gives the definite impression that the changes were made in Berlin. In one place he even makes a distinction between the parts struck out of the manuscript by the "editorial blue-pencil" and a "correction made by Engels himself in the proof-sheet. One may take his choice between this representation of Riazanov and the dubious "circumstantial evidence" of the S. L. P. according to his fancy.

But Shachtman has got himself into such a position, he is so concentrated on the design of "making a case" against comrade Swaback that he passes over the principle issue of the dispute, and its aims on each side. And, without realizing what he was doing, or the spirit he reveals in doing it, he undertakes the same task, if not for the same ends, as that undertaken in the S. L. P. pamphlet "Who are the Falsifiers?": to discredit Riazanov's discovery of the original manuscript.

He hammers on all keys: "The whole introduction, ungarbled, honest, undistorted, was printed by Kautsky." "... the whole which Kautsky printed with Engels authorization and proof corrections." "The deleted sections are obviously those which Engels himself had blue-pencilled." And then, having completely convinced himself, he declares: "Neither Riazanov nor Trachtenberg dare to say the contrary." "What do you mean 'Riazanov does not dare'?" Against

whom is he fighting? Whom should he be afraid of? Why do you challenge him in such a tone? Comrade Shachtman joes himself no credit by this belligerent challenge to Blazanov. And comrade Carter, who is in pursuit of "historic truth" for its own sake, follows on the path comrade Shachtman with some observations that are no less remarkable. Comrade Shachtman has explained that Carter expressed himself "awkwardly". And for that his actual trend of thought sticks out all the more crassly.

Comrade Carter is offended because comrade Swaback brushed aside the quibblings of the S. L. P. and paid no attention to them. He also is quite sure that Engels changed the Introduction himself. And he actually complains--in his statement to the National Youth Committee--that comrade Swaback "does not so much as mention the S. L. P. pamphlet 'Who are the Falsifiers?'" This negligence convinces him "that comrade Swaback's interest was not in correcting a misinterpretation of facts and historical documents". Comrade Carter is undoubtedly against the conclusions of the legalists, but he gives their "historio-impartiality" a trusting confidence in his dispute with Swaback.

The refutation of the revisionist and S. L. P. claims to base themselves on the authority of Engels, and the purging of our press of any remarks that could in any way, help these claims--this is the question which interested us as revolutionists. This was the obvious aim of comrade Swaback's article in the Militant.

#### The Criticism of Luxemburg and Trotsky

Comrade Shachtman overlooked this side of the question--or at any rate referred to it only in passing--and released instead a flood of quotations from the discussion over the "Introduction" which took place in the revolutionary camp before the world war. This discussion, of course, had its own value, but it has very little to do with the real question in dispute: the misrepresentation of Engels' position in Young Spartacus. But even on this side of the question we cannot find a common standpoint with him.

Comrade Shachtman assures us that the paragraph in Carter's article, to which Swaback replies, is merely a paraphrase in a very condensed form of what "Rosa (he means Luxemburg) herself said" in her speech at the first congress of the C.S.P. We didn't know that, and no one could know it from a reading of the paragraph, and we do not know it yet, after all the explanations, including that of Shachtman. Such may have been Carter's intention. We shall not dispute that--but his statements are in no sense a "condensed form" of Luxemburg's remarks, not even an "awkward" one. Luxemburg did discuss and criticize Engels' Introduction in her speech, but an examination of its text will show very conclusively that her position is in no way related to the one defended by Shachtman and Carter.

In the first place, Luxemburg did not have the opinion which Shachtman and Carter advance--in dubious solidarity with the S. L. P. that the "Introduction" in the published version, represented the "undistorted" views of Engels on the question. And every line of her speech shows that she could not have agreed with their idea that the deleted sections--discovered after her death--have no significance. To say that Engels' Introduction is fully correct and that Luxemburg's speech is also correct--as they do--is to play with words as well as with ideas. She criticized the position of Engels, as it is presented one-sidedly in the published version of the Introduction.

and not from the standpoint that it was right at the time it was written and later became "outlived", precisely because it appeared to leave out of consideration those phases of the question directly handled in the deleted sections which were just as valid in 1895 as today.

How far removed from the essential argument that the published version of the Introduction is a whole and fair presentation of Engels' actual revolutionary position in Luxemburg's comment on the document. In an earlier polemic, which Shachtman quotes, she interpreted and defended the Introduction in general. But in her speech at the party Congress she submitted it to a closer examination and found grave faults in it. But for these faults she did not hold Engels personally responsible, as Shachtman and Carter do when they deprecate the importance of the deleted sections and ascribe their deletion to Engels himself. She blamed the Party leaders for the shortcomings of the published version. This is what she said: "I must remind you of the well-known fact that the Introduction in question was written by Engels under strong pressure on the part of the parliamentary group...they assured Engels, who lived abroad and naturally accepted the assurance at its face-value, that it was absolutely essential to safeguard the German labor movement from a lapse into anarchism, and in this way they constrained him to write in the tone they wished."

Here was a straight-out condemnation of the Party leaders for their imposition on Engels.--for their abuse of his good faith. For the game they played, as Riazanov says, "with marked cards". And she never accused Engels of a principle deviation. She said in that same speech: "We take our stand upon the ground occupied by Marx and Engels in 1848; we adopt a position from which in principle they never moved." If comrades Shachtman and Carter were really to stand on the position of Luxemburg it would signify a big step forward. But even then they would not be entirely right, for in the light of the original manuscript, Luxemburg herself was not entirely right in her speech.

Luxemburg stated plainly--in contra-distinction to comrades Shachtman and Carter who agree with the Introduction and also agree with her speech--that "the Introduction was the formal proclamation of the nothing but parliamentary tactics." And further: "When Engels' preface declares that, owing to the modern development of gigantic armies, it is positively insane to suppose that proletarians can ever stand up against soldiers armed with machine guns and equipped with all the latest technical devices, the assertion is obviously based upon the assumption that anyone who becomes a soldier becomes thereby once and for all one of the props of the ruling class. It would be absolutely incomprehensible in the light of contemporary experience, that so noted a leader as Engels could have committed such a blunder, and we not know the circumstances in which this historical document was composed."

Could Rosa Luxemburg have said these words and in this way. If she had known what Engels actually wrote in the original manuscript, directly after the passage to which she refers? Instead of speaking of this "blunder" would she not rather have said as Riazanov said: "These words appear to me like a prophecy of the experiences of the October Revolution!"?

has thrown in as some kind of a proof against Swebeck, although it serves an opposite end.

Continuing his scholarly exposition of "dialectics" to prove that everybody was right--Engels' Introduction and those revolutionists who criticized it in the form in which it was published--Shachtman has recourse to Trotsky. The bringing of this quotation reveals even more clearly the empty verbalism with which he is playing around the whole question. Here is the full quotation as Shachtman gives it:

"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 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 showed himself to be pretty one-sided in the appraisal of the role which is due to modern technique in revolutionary uprisings; on the other side, he did not consider it necessary to present the fact 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 once more brought 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, from "1905" pages 202-4)

This, says Shachtman, who claims the published Introduction said all that needed to be said for the Marxists to understand and that the deletions add nothing essential, "showed how Engels' standpoint was no longer applicable." One must have very little regard for the meaning of words or the intelligence of his readers to ask them to put such a construction on the quoted remarks of Trotsky.

Trotsky didn't criticize Engels for what the Introduction said, but for what it left unsaid. He found that the Introduction as it was printed, "created room for great misunderstandings," that Engels was pretty "one-sided", that he did not consider that the evolution of the army can be brought out by "confronting" it.

But it was just this "one-sidedness" that is balanced by the inclusion in the Introduction of these deleted sections which have been quoted above--and which Riazanov appraises as "a prophecy of the October revolution." We do not believe that Trotsky, any more than Rosa Luxemburg, would have made these criticisms of Engels if the whole Introduction, as Engels wrote it, had been before him at the time.

#### "Revisionist Premises."

Comrade Shachtman has undertaken a factional defense of comrade Carter's indefensible statement. To accomplish this, in an indirect way, he had to discredit comrade Swebeck's reply to Carter. Every step on this path led him so much deeper into the morass of sophistry, passed off as "dialectics". To judge by his exposition, dialectics is some kind of legerdemain in which things never stand as they appear to stand, a mystery in which plain statement and definite easily-verified facts have no place.

The fact, for example, that comrade Swabeck, in refuting comrade Carter's misrepresentation of Engels, quoted the plain, simple, direct words of the original text is only a proof of his ignorance of the Marxist method. It reveals to comrade Shachtman that Swabeck "has not understood the first thing about the historical dispute," and, in his bungling ignorance, "actually approaches the question from opportunist premises." Let us see.

Even before the war, says Shachtman, the leading Marxists in the Second International interpreted the published version in a revolutionary sense. That is true, and they had the right on their side; they represented the true revolutionary thought of Engels. But Shachtman leaves out of account--or, rather, mentions only in passing, the fact that the revisionists, among whom there were not a few "dialectical" jugglers, also interpreted the Introduction in a revisionist sense. And he passes over altogether the success of the revisionists in deceiving the socialist workers. The one-sided statements in the Introduction, unqualified by the sections which they had deleted, were weapons in their hands, and gave them an advantage before the socialist masses who respected the authority of Engels. That is why Kautsky, according to Riazanov, blamed the party leaders because Engels' "blue-pencilled" Introduction did not manifest his views with the "necessary clarity and decisiveness." That is why he demanded that Bernstein publish the original manuscript.

One would think, from comrade Shachtman's presentation of the question, that real Marxists are distinguished by indirection of speech, that they never use plain words to explain things. If Engels appears to speak one-sidedly, or to leave something unsaid for the moment, in consideration of the pending anti-socialist law, and "the timidity of our Berlin friends" or because these same "friends" themselves mutilated his manuscript--then that, according to Shachtman's twaddle about "revisionist premises", is the correct way to speak under all conditions. And if Swabeck now does not rest upon the pre-war interpretation of the Marxists and refers to the new facts and cites the plain words, he "doesn't understand the first thing about this historical dispute."

The conduct of the present "historical dispute" about Socialism in one country shows how much this conception of "dialectics" has to do with the fighting methods of the Russian Marxists. They can demonstrate, and they have demonstrated, the falsity of this theory on political and theoretical grounds without resorting to a single direct quotation from any Marxist authority. But when the epigones advance this theory on the authority of Lenin, as the revisionists claimed the authority of Engels, the Russian Oppositionists did not rest with a purely theoretical explanation of the question. They knew--what Shachtman leaves out of account--that the masses are not educated Marxists. They understood--what Shachtman has not thought of--that the masses have a great regard for the authority of the classic teachers and can be deceived by treacherous references to them.

Therefore, when Stalin began to quote Lenin for "Socialism in one country", the Russian Opposition brought the direct words of Lenin himself to refute them, just as Swabeck brought the direct words of Engels. In one section of Trotsky's "Criticism of the Draft Program" alone--although quotation is not his customary polemical method--he makes twenty-two quotations from Lenin to show that the advocates of Socialism in one country had no right to his authority.

Carter's article was a newspaper article to be read by uneducated young workers. He made a statement that misrepresented Engels. Swaback cited the words of Engels himself to refute it. Under the circumstances that was the simplest, the most effective and therefore the correct way to dispose of the misrepresentation.

### False Issues and Strange Methods,

A large part of comrade Shachtman's document is devoted to a very learned elucidation of the idea that legal and illegal and illegal methods of struggle are not mutually exclusive, that the emphasis shifts from one to the other and back again according to conditions of the time, without necessarily affecting principle. This instruction was necessary for us because we didn't know it before. To be sure, it was precisely we who initiated into the struggle in the Party more than ten years ago against the "armed insurrection" propaganda of that time; we were likewise in the front of the fight to bring the Party out of its underground sectarianism and establish its legal existence; it is true that we are even now pressing the Party to emphasize the fight for "democratic rights" and to guard its legality--and in all that time we remained communists. But comrade Shachtman found it necessary to explain to us--at length, in detail, and with patient reiteration, so that even a very dull person could understand the instruction--that Engels did preach "peacefulness and anti-violence" for the time in Germany in 1895, that we should not be afraid to admit it, and that Engels did not, because of that, "cease to be a revolutionist."

When Swaback denied the statement of comrade Carter, that Engels had "proclaimed the tactic of the Communist Manifesto outlived", comrade Shachtman asks: "Is it possible that comrade Swaback has not even read the foreword, where the change is advocated in just so many words?" And then he goes on to accuse Swaback of fearing to quote Engels' letter to Lafargue to the effect that "I preach this tactic (peacefulness and anti-violence) only for the Germany of today and even then with substantial reservation," because "it would upset all his contentions."

But comrade Shachtman has practised just a little sleight-of-hand here and put the object in a different box. Comrade Swaback refuted the claim that Engels had declared revolutionary tactics--"armed insurrection, guerilla warfare, force and violence--outlived." Comrade Shachtman makes him deny that Engels preached "peacefulness and anti-violence" for the moment in 1895 and makes him imply that such position would have meant "that Engels became a revisionist, a la Bernstein"--"That is what I mean," he says, "by saying that Swaback approaches the question with revisionist premises!"

And then, having put comrade Swaback, without his knowledge or consent, in a position in which neither Swaback nor anybody else that we know of in the American Party has defended since the fight with the "leftists" ten years ago, comrade Shachtman proceeds at full swing to demolish Swaback. With erudite historical references, quotations, sneers, quips and rhetorical flights--to say nothing of the inevitable appeal to "dialectics" which has served so often as a cover for mere verbalistic tricks--comrade Shachtman demonstrates the absurdity of comrade Swaback's "position".

To all this it is only necessary to reply: Comrade Swaback's article never maintained the position which comrade Shachtman attributes to him and nobody could honestly read such an implication into

it. When he said in the article, "Engels in his introduction draws a sharp distinction between the conditions of 1848 and those of 1895. This is as it should be," he said all that needed to be said on this side of the question. The inference from that regarding the Party method of the moment is perfectly clear, and especially so to comrade Shachtman who knows the part we played in the fight with the "leftists" on just such points. There is no possibility whatever for him to have been deceived as to Swabeck's meaning. His gymnastics around this point have no bearing at all on the question in dispute. The polemic method he has introduced represents a sharp departure from our practice in discussing things. We have known this method only from our struggle against it. In our ranks we encounter it now for the first time.

#### CONCERNING "TONE" AND "PROCEDURE"

The agitation around comrade Swabeck's article began, as has so often been the case with factional movements, which do not want to proclaim their political aims, with protests against the "tone" of the article and the "procedure" of its publication. The attempt to work out a political defense of Carter's statement about Engels began only late and has already gone through a curious evolution. At first it never occurred to anybody, except Carter himself--and least of all perhaps Shachtman, who made no comment at all when he first saw the article--to offer a justification for this scandalous statement. That came only after the atmosphere had been sufficiently heated about the "tone" and "procedure" to prevent a really objective discussion of the principle issue at stake. This lack of objectivity undoubtedly played a part in pushing comrade Shachtman from one false position to another since the publication of the article in question.

If there were nothing involved but a mistake in procedure, and a wrong tone in the article, the matter could easily have been rectified. Comrade Shachtman could have appealed to the resident National Committee of five. Failing there, he could have submitted his protest to the non-resident members whose impartiality and fairness in matters of relations between comrades is well known.

But Shachtman did neither. He insisted on making his attack on the article known to the N. Y. branch members before the National Committee had an opportunity to hear his criticism.

At the meeting of the National Committee on March 7th he insisted on discussing the whole question--and making the most violent accusation in the presence of comrades Carter, Ray and Basky, and twice rejected our proposals to consider the matter first in the Committee. Thus the disruption of the Committee and its inability to act as a body was deliberately advertised to the members of the branch, for comrade Shachtman knew as well as we that Comrades Carter and Ray were there as representatives of an oppositional grouping that would learn of the situation and take courage from it. This, of course, is what happened.

It is argued that comrade Carter's meaning was misrepresented. In reply to that we can only say that we understood his statement to mean what it said. We were not under the impression that comrade Carter--who will admit on any occasion that his education, in a formal and literary as well as in a political sense is superior to ours--is so "hawkward" a journalist as to say "armed insurrection", and "force and violence" when he means only certain forms of such action, and "outlived" when he means inapplicable at the moment. However, if we really misunderstood his meaning, he had and still has an easy means of redress. I

had only to reformulate his statement in a correct way that would do justice both to himself and to Engels and the matter could have been disposed of by a correction of everything including the tone of the criticism, in the Militant. We have no wish to misrepresent the position of a comrade. Our political method does not misrepresent the position of anybody, not even the Stalinists or the Right Wing. We always aim to state their position fairly in every polemic we conduct against them. We challenge anybody to show the contrary.

But comrade Carter had no thought of reformulating and correcting his statement. He was not interested in justice, but in factional capital. Before coming to the National Committee he first went to the National Youth Committee and induced it to pass a resolution against the "tone" and the "procedure" of comrade Swaback's article. And at the meeting of the National Committee on March 7th he was directly asked by comrade Swaback "WU" if he wished to reformulate his statement and he declined to do so. And he hasn't reformulated it yet. On the contrary, he has written an article defending it as it stands.

There is a certain comic interest in the fact that the meeting of the National Youth Committee--a subordinate, appointive sub-committee--which adopted comrade Carter's protest against the "procedure" was held without the participation of a representative of the National Committee. Comrade Swaback, who was sitting at his desk in the next room, was not even informed that the meeting was passing judgment on his article and was not invited to come in and explain his point of view before the motion was passed to condemn him. Formal procedure which is raised into a principle on one side is completely forgotten on the other--as is usually the case when deeper issues are really involved.

And matters stand exactly the same way about the "tone" of the dispute. At the same meeting of the National Youth Committee where he demanded the protest against Swaback's tone, in Swaback's absence, comrade Carter submitted a statement which refers to comrade Swaback in such terms as "non-communist action;" "breaks with that essential Bolshevik loyalty and honesty"; "illogical, stupid, puerile and dishonest piece of writing," and similar comradely salutations which belong to the language of one who is interested above all in lubricating personal relations by polite speech. This document of comrade Carter's, says comrade Shachtman, is "inside the organization" and therefore doesn't count. We do not care a fig for this distinction, and we care even less for the hypocritical pretense that condemns the "tone" on one side and condones it--and employs it--on the other.

But comrade Shachtman advises us with patriarchal wisdom: Swaback "should be a teacher of the young comrades, ought to have made him aware before cracking open his skull in public." This advice about the way to deal with the mistakes of Comrade Carter would have more weight if there were no previous experience to judge by.

Haven't efforts been made, not once or twice, but scores of times to explain things to comrade Carter in the branch meetings, and in friendly, more or less private conversations? And can comrade Shachtman tell us of a single occasion when Carter ever learned anything, acknowledged anything or corrected anything as a result of such efforts? Comrade Shachtman ought to know better than anyone the futility of such a method with wise-acres and know-it-alls. He has set up and employed this method in contrast to our inclination for a political struggle against the upstart spirit they represent. By this shoddy "cleverness" this wise method of handling an abominable parvenu tendency by personal

diplomacy, comrade Shachtman only muddles things, flatters the\* and encourages the tendency and hampers the revolutionary education and development of the New York Branch.

Comrade Shachtman's complaints about procedure on his own account, could easily be adjusted with our full agreement in the National Committee, even if we are not very fond of the psychology which puts such stress on personal rights and personal grievances. Insofar as it is a question of a really collective control by the committee over the contents of the Militant, of the right of every member to bring his protest against a given article to the body before its publication, or of establishing safeguards against arbitrary acts of an individual or a minority--he will not have to quarrel with us. We stand firmly by this principle and have explained it to him on more than one occasion. On this point it was only necessary for him to make the necessary motions regulating future procedure and we would have voted for them, or to point out a transgression our part--if it was really a transgression, and not a misunderstanding--and we would acknowledge it. Our

Our understanding of the circumstances under which comrade Swabek's article was published is not exactly the same as that presented by Shachtman. He admits the question of Carter's reference to Engels was raised at a meeting of the National Committee by Swabek and that he then announced his intention to reply to it, and that nobody spoke against Swabek's intention. That is exactly what happened in regards to the La Salle article. At the same meeting Cannon said he would answer it in an editorial note. No formal motion was made in either case. The reply to the La Salle review appeared without any further consultation and evoked no protest. The assignment for the writing of scores of articles in the past has been indicated in this semi-formal way without mention in the minutes. There is nothing wrong with this method--in practical work all editorial boards function this way to a certain extent, when there is general agreement.

It is a different matter, of course, when differences of opinion are expressed as to the contents of an article or the advisability of printing it at all. Then a formal vote is necessary. But Shachtman's remarks show that no differences were expressed on the article in question. When he says "nobody spoke on it," he admits that nobody protested against it. According to our usual procedure that was an assignment to write the article--at least we so understood it. Therefore when comrade Shachtman says: "In no sense was Swabek's commission to reply to Carter, nor was there any understanding or decision that a reply was required." he is squeezing the procedure of the Committee on editorial matters into a strict formality that it has never observed, and that in the past concerned him least of all.

In many instances articles have been written on such informal assignment and printed without showing them to the other members of the Committee for criticism or corrections. The fact that comrade Swabek didn't find the time for several weeks to write the reply to Carter, and that after writing it he took the trouble to show it to the various members of the committee, is sufficient to show that comrade Swabek was in no hurry to circumvent the committee. Even then the article was published without its formal consideration by the committee only because of the postponement of the meeting.

It is quite true that the article might have waited another week. But Shachtman had seen the article and made no criticism of it. How was anyone to know that he was "reserving his opinion" for the meeting

and that this opinion would be a disciple [?] always been in the habit of exchanging opinions frankly in looking over each other's articles and that is the communist way to work together. Comrade Abern made no principle objections to the article, but expressed doubts as to the advisability of public criticism.

The objections of comrade Abern might be considered reason enough to postpone the publication of the article till the committee meeting. We should have done that under the circumstances, and if the matter had been fully considered, would have done so. We can acknowledge the justice of criticism on this score all the more readily because we stand for the principle of collective responsibility for the paper in the real, and not merely in the formal, sense.

This was precisely one of the subjects of discussion at the Plenum in the spring of 1930. It arose in connection with the publication of an article by Shachtman, on the needle trades. In that article comrade Shachtman certified to the correctness of the charge that the Left Wing had bribed the police. Against this shameful article, giving aid to the "Forward" and the whole Black Hundred gang against the Left Wing, which is a blot on the record of the Militant, comrade Cannon had raised a violent objection, and had insisted that the paragraph in question be stricken out. This comrade Shachtman refused to do, and likewise found it unnecessary to delay the matter for a committee meeting on it. At that Plenum we advanced the idea of a really collective control of the paper and of the right of any member of the committee to delay an article until his objections shall have been duly considered. Comrade Shachtman could not see the justice of this criticism at the Plenum, and could not acknowledge any fault in his action. That is why his clamor at the present moment about strictly formal procedures has such a hollow sound; argues so convincingly that the real source of his indignation lies elsewhere.

### About "Stalinism"

From what has been said above it is quite clear that comrade Shachtman had no ground to attack the article of comrade Swaback on principle and that in attempting to do so he only succeeded in confusing the real question at issue and filling the air with extraneous arguments based on a flagrant misrepresentation of comrade Swaback's position and his purpose. If one can find a certain merit--even if there is no consistency--in his objection to the procedure and the tone of the article, the way to redress these offenses was open to him as has been indicated by normal methods within the National Committee or at least within the full committee by referendum or by a Plenum.

He chose another way. By his action, and by his document, he has elected to hurl the dispute into the membership in an atmosphere of crisis. And by the presentation of this document--which only formulates and systematizes the agitation carried on by his friends in an even cruder and more outspoken form--he is asking that we be adjudged as Stalinist bureaucrats and as people who approach theoretical questions "from opportunist premises". On the latter accusation we have already spoken. It is now time to speak of the alleged identity of our methods with the methods of Stalin; about our "fundamentally bureaucratic procedure" which, it appears, is not an incidental digression but a "characteristic" one, "characteristic of bureaucratism".

If comrade Shachtman really means these accusations seriously, if they are not merely journalistic flourishes, then they can only be a

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summons to the organization to draw the necessary conclusions in regards to its leading staff. The members of the Left Opposition cannot and will not allow accusations of this character to be bandied about loosely. Some of them, at least, learned about Stalinist bureaucratism through blows over the head in reply to their criticisms; and in the course of the struggle they assimilated the idea that "characteristic bureaucratism" is not an independent phenomenon, but rather represents and is necessitated by, a systematic political course that violates the interests and the Marxist traditions of the movement and has to be imposed on it by violence and deception. No, the Left Oppositionists will not reconcile themselves with "characteristic bureaucratism" and will not tolerate those who represent it.

Neither can they let the question, once projected, remain undecided. If the accusation is really true; if this section of the leadership which helped to educate the members to understand and to hate Stalinist bureaucratism have been playing a double game; if they are in reality Stalinists in disguise, and not very well disguised at that--then the organization will settle accounts with them in short order. On the other hand, if the accusation is a light-minded slander, and can be shown to be such, then the slanderers must be called to order. One way or the other--but no middle way!

If the action of comrades Swabock and Cannon in the incident under discussion were Stalinist actions, if our treatment of Carter was "as comradely as our expulsion from the Party was comradely," as comrade Abern stated at the committee meeting of March 7, in the presence of several branch members, and if it was "characteristic" of us, then it follows that we have left a fairly clear bureaucratic trail in our conduct over a period of time. And right here we ask for an examination of this record, and a proof of this characteristic and systematic line, not with loose generalities but with concrete facts. Our part in the leadership of the League has been conducted before the eyes of the membership. Show us how and wherein the "characteristic" bureaucratic quality has been manifested.

In order to assist those who wish to examine the record over a period of three and one-half years since our expulsion from the Party, and to judge us by our part in the making of that record, we cite here a number of facts and events in the life of the organization which we consider most significant and most revealing as to the "method" of the leadership, and of ourselves in particular.

1. Disputes with the branches. We had differences, more or less serious, with various branches of the League, including Minneapolis, Boston, Toronto, and Philadelphia. Has any one of these branches at any time ever protested against our method of conducting the disputes? Name one.

2. The first National Conference. After six months of preparation following our expulsion from the party, we consolidated the organization at our first National Conference. The conference was arranged and conducted in a fair democratic way, full rights of discussion were enjoyed, and the leadership was selected by general and unanimous agreement. What was bureaucratic about this conference?

3. The Second National Conference. This Conference summed up the experience of three years of the Opposition struggle as an expelled fraction. It was preceded by more than two months of free discussion

of the publication of the National Committee therein. More space was accorded in the discussion pages of the Militant to criticism than to defense of the thesis. The delegates from the branches were freely elected without pressure from above and they recorded their agreement with us on every important question--almost unanimously where the Committee stood united, and by an overwhelming majority when comrade Shachtman made different proposals (the selection of the new N. C.)

What did the management of this conference have in common with the methods of Stalinism?

4. The Fox incident. Shortly after the first National Conference an oppositional movement was started by Fox in the New York branch on a manifestly false political basis and with a highly disruptive form of activity. We continued the discussion on these questions for meeting after meeting until the issues were fully clarified and a number of conscientious comrades who had at first given Fox a certain sympathy, got a clearer view of things and broke away from him. Expulsion eventually took place, only after the branch had convinced itself of the necessity for this action and began to protest against our prolongation of the discussion. The branch itself, by unanimous vote, expelled two members, and two others withdrew. Following the liquidation of this affair the activity of the branch took a forward jump. The further evolution of the expelled members testifies to the correctness and the necessity of the organization measures. Where was the "characteristic bureaucratism" manifested in this conflict?

5. The Weisbord affair. It will be recalled that Weisbord, at one time, had a factional grouping in the New York branch, and had some sympathy from other members. His factional method was personal slander against the leadership with his political platform smuggled in under that cover--after the usual manner of opportunists. We put the real questions of policy on the agenda and discussed them fully with the branch, giving Weisbord, who was not even a member of the organization, an opportunity to present his views at the same time. The result, which is well known, was a complete defeat for Weisbord in a political sense and at the same time a demonstration of the futility of slander in disputes within our League (a warning to others). One expulsion and one resignation were the total of the organization measures which the branch found necessary to wind up the conflict. Did we defeat Weisbord, and have we since that time demolished his attempts to split the League or set up a rival against it, by Stalinist bureaucratic methods, or by genuine political struggle?

6. The Toronto Branch. A grouping within the Toronto branch quite similar in composition to the Carter grouping in the New York branch, developed a line of policy which we had to characterize as semi-capitalist. For example, rejecting the proposals of comrade Spector, they declined to send official delegates of the League to the United Front Conference against the Sedition Law in order to avoid a conflict with the Party. They had no more respect for the opinions of the N. C. on these questions than for the personal advice of comrade Spector, and rejected our directions. After some more experience by the branch, which gave sharper proof of the original error, the policy was corrected. What disciplinary steps, to say nothing of bureaucratic actions, were taken, except to explain our views in correspondence and in a few remarks in the Militant?

Yes, there were a few organizational measures taken by the New York branch at our suggestion, and the N. C. itself threw out two or three people from the national organization--in a political movement

that cannot be entirely avoided. But in every case these measures only disposed of personal obstructions after the political issues had been firmly decided, and the necessity of the steps was understood and agreed to by the membership. Over a period of three and one-half years the League maintained a firm unity. It got rid of a few miserable capitulators who tried to sow demoralization, beginning with slander against us. Without any serious convulsions we isolated and sloughed off a few disruptors who also, before their departure, pelted us with filth they had gathered from the garbage pails of the political enemies of the Left Opposition. But was anybody expelled unnecessarily or unjustly? Did a single one of those whom we threw out show by his subsequent conduct that we had misjudged him, or did not their further evolution confirm our judgment in every case? Has anyone been denied the right to criticize or been expelled for criticizing the right?

In this series of incidents and events, in the internal life of League, the method of the leadership has been clearly recorded. Where, in this record from start to finish, has the Stalinist abuse of authority been seen? And--more important--where had been the false policy imposed upon the organization by such an abuse? Comrade Shachtman, of course, cannot show that because it did not exist and no one can discover it. If he answers that the leadership as a whole conducted these struggles and unfolded this method--which is quite true--it does not change matters with regard to his accusations. For he cannot show in any case where we demanded a different line, and our part in the execution of the Committee's policy is known.

These are indeed remnants of Stalinism and other political maladies in the New York Branch. And it could not be otherwise, for it contains comrades who have not fully overcome the effects of their miseducation in the Party, who are impressed by the propaganda of the Stalinists, especially by their slander, and repeat it in slightly moderated forms. And along with them there are others who never had any Party or other experience in the class struggle, and show it sadly. These are the comrades who concern themselves unduly over personal matters; who have time and inclination for gossip and go around with their ears cocked for scandal, and who arrive at their "position" in disputes on the basis of these trivial considerations. Along with them the New York branch has, besides some earnest young workers, 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. And there are others who are excited about nothing in the world so much as the fact that somebody stepped on their toes. At the present moment, under the stimulus of comrade Shachtman's attack, we see these elements converging into a sort of "faction" insofar as such a heterogeneous combination, which has nothing in common except paltry grievances, can be so designated. But it is not our faction!

Our aims run along different lines, and we will not conceal them. We conceive of the League as the potential nucleus of the future Party and we want a deliberate course to bring the organization, and especially the New York branch, more into harmony with this conception. That means first of all, to translate the lessons of the internal struggle in the International Opposition into the American language, and assist the entire organization to assimilate them. This will not be accomplished in a day and without struggle. But we are late. We must begin.

The key to the present problem is the New York branch. The present composition of the branch is, in general, unfavorable for its develop-

ment as a proletarian-revolutionary organization. The elements of superficial intellectualism and scholasticism, sterility, of pre-occupation with mere quibbling, and difference to real questions and practical tasks of the day--these elements, leaning on comrade Shachtman, exert a disproportionate influence. They represent in reality a unwholesome tendency which, on the one hand, hampers the activity of the branch and obstructs the political education of its members, and, on the other hand, renders it inaccessible to serious workers.

The improvement of the situation requires, as the first step, a frank statement of the problem and then the beginning of a genuine political selection of forces by the method of political education. The selection must take place no less among the "young" than among the old, separating the revolutionary elements from the more triflers, the proletarian militants from the scholastic quibblers. The serious elements amongst the youth will find their place beside us, and they will be most resolute fighters against the attempt to ignore political tendencies in favor of a division according to age. And to the extent that they grasp the real question at issue, they will reject flattery and the demagogic suggestion that their function is to lead. Before the youth can lead they must learn, and not from books only but from life; they must go through some tests and give some proofs of their revolutionary qualities--of their courage, stability, endurance, and capacity to sacrifice for the cause.

The ability to find one's way in the present discussion is one of those tests, of which there will be many, by means of which the selection of forces for the future will gradually take place. To the degree that the comrades, and especially the young comrades, resolutely put aside superficial, incidental and personal factors, occupy themselves with serious and ~~serious~~ decisive questions, and judge them by political criteria, the discussion will bring fruitful results. On that basis the unity of the League will be more firmly established, and we can undertake the next steps toward the fulfillment of our historic tasks with a surer confidence.

James P Cannon  
Arne Swabeck

March 22, 1932