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Lunkino, le 5 janvier 1930

à publier, mais non à publier

Chers amis,

Dans le journal de Milioukov (les Dernières Nouvelles) du 29 décembre il y a le télégramme suivant :

Blumkine est fusillé  
Cologne, 28 décembre. - Le correspondant de Moscou du Journal de Cologne / télégraphie : Ces jours-ci fut arrêté sur l'ordre du Guépéou le notaire Blumkine, le meurtrier de Mirbach. Blumkine fut accusé d'entretenir des relations secrètes avec Trotsky. D'après la sentence du Guépéou, Blumkine fut fusillé.

Cette communication est-elle juste ? Je n'en possède pas une certitude absolue. Mais tout un enchaînement de circonstances non seulement me permettent, mais me forcent à croire qu'elle est juste. Pour m'exprimer plus exactement : intérieurement je n'ai aucun doute. Ce qui me manque, c'est une confirmation juridique de l'assassinat de Blumkine par Staline.

Vous savez certainement que quelque temps après l'insurrection armée des socialistes révolutionnaires de gauche, Blumkine passait aux bolcheviks, prenait une part héroïque à la guerre civile et puis travaillait assez longtemps dans mon secrétariat militaire. Plus tard il restait surtout au service du Guépéou, mais aussi au service militaire et à celui du parti. Il accomplissait dans divers pays des missions de la plus haute importance. Son dévouement à la Révolution d'octobre et au parti était absolu.

Jusqu'à la dernière heure Blumkine accomplit le travail d'une fonction soviétique très importante. Comment a-t-il pu s'y tenir en appartenant à l'opposition ? Cela s'explique par le caractère de son travail : celui-ci était tout à fait individuel. Blumkine n'avait pas ou presque pas affaire avec les noyaux communistes, la possibilité de participer à la discussion de des questions du parti, etc. Cela ne signifie pas qu'il cachait ses pensées. Au contraire. A Menjinsky et à Trilisser, l'ancien chef de la section étrangère du Guépéou, Blumkine avait déclaré que ses sympathies allaient à l'opposition ; mais, que naturellement, comme tout autre oppositional, il était tout à fait prêt à accomplir sa fonction importante au service de la Révolution d'octobre. Menjinsky et Trilisser considéraient Blumkine comme irremplaçable, et c'était exact. Ils l'ont laissé à sa besogne, qu'il a accomplie jusqu'au bout.

Blumkine m'a vraiment visité à Constantinople. J'ai déjà mentionné que Blumkine était lié avec moi par les liens étroits du travail dans mon secrétariat. Il avait préparé en particulier un de mes volumes militaires (j'en parle dans la préface de ce volume). Blumkine est venu à Constantinople chez moi pour s'informer comment j'appréciais la situation et pour vérifier s'il agissait justement en restant au service du gouvernement qui déperdit, hantait et emprisonne les camarades de sa tendance. Je lui ai répondu naturellement qu'il agissait tout à fait justement en accomplissant son devoir révolutionnaire ~~xxxxxxx~~ - non envers le gouvernement de Staline, qui avait usurpé les droits du parti, mais envers la Révolution d'octobre.

On vous a peut-être cité, d'un des articles d'Iareslavsky, une allégation concernant mon entretien pendant l'été avec un visiteur à qui j'aurais prédit la perte inévitable et proche du gouvernement soviétique. Les sycophantes misérables mentent, cela va de soi. Mais par un rapprochement de faits et de dates je suis certain qu'il s'agit de mon entretien avec Blumkine. À sa question sur la possibilité de concilier son travail et son appartenance à l'opposition, je lui dis entre autres que mon exil comme l'emprisonnement d'autres camarades ne changent pas notre ligne fondamentale ; qu'au moment du danger les oppositionalnels seront aux postes avancés ; qu'aux heures difficiles Staline sera forcé de leur faire appel comme Tséretelli avait appelé les bolcheviks contre Kornilov. En liaison avec cela j'ajoutais : "mais que ce ne soit pas trop tard". Evidemment Blumkine après son arrestation a exposé cet entretien comme une démonstration des véritables état d'âme et disposition de l'opposition : il ne faut pas oublier que je suis exilé sur l'accusation de préparer la lutte armée contre le pouvoir des Soviets.

Par Blumkine je transmis à Moscou pour nos amis une lettre d'information basée sur les mêmes idées que j'ai exposées dans une série d'articles publiés : la répression des stalinistes contre nous ne signifie pas encore le changement du caractère de classe de l'Etat, mais prépare seulement et facilite un tel changement ; notre voie reste, comme par le passé, celle de la réforme et non celle de la révolution ; la lutte implacable pour nos idées doit être orientée vers un long délai.

Je reçois ultérieurement la communication que Blumkin était arrêté et que la lettre transmise par son intermédiaire était tombée entre les mains de Staline. Je ne sais rien des conditions dans lesquelles Blumkin fut arrêté. Les gouvernants de Moscou savent qu'il avait passé par Constantinople. Ses chefs (Dzerjinsky, Trilissier) connaissent bien ses idées oppositionnelles. Il s'est rendu à Moscou de sa propre initiative dans l'intérêt du ~~xxx~~ travail qu'il accomplissait. Sur les événements ultérieurs je ne sais que ce qui est dit dans le télégramme ci-dessus du Journal de Cologne.

L'importance de ce fait n'exige pas d'explications. Vous savez par le fameux procès de 1922 qu'on a évité de fusiller même les socialistes révolutionnaires qui avaient organisé des attentats contre Lénine, Ouritsky, Volodarsky, moi-même et autres. Des socialistes révolutionnaires de gauche, auxquels avait appartenu en 1918 Blumkin, on n'a fusillé, au moment de leur insurrection, que l'organisateur, Alexandrovitch. Blumkin, un des participants de cette insurrection, est bientôt devenu ~~un~~ bolchevik. Mais si on ne l'a pas fusillé en 1918 pour sa participation dirigée à l'insurrection armée contre le pouvoir des Soviets, on l'a fusillé en 1929 pour cette raison que, en servant courageusement la Révolution d'Octobre, il ne partageait pas sur les questions les plus importantes les idées de la fraction stalinienne et considérait de son devoir de répandre les idées des bolcheviks-léninistes (opposition).

Blumkin est fusillé - je n'en ai pas le moindre doute - sur l'arrêt du Guépécou. Un fait pareil n'a pu avoir lieu que parce que le Guépécou est devenu l'organe personnel de Staline. Pendant les années de la guerre civile, la Tcheka accomplissait un besoin sévère. Mais ce travail restait sous le contrôle du parti. Des centaines de fois se sont élevées des milieux du parti des protestations, des déclarations et des demandes ou exigences d'explications concernant tel ou tel arrêt. A la tête de la Tcheka se trouvait Dzerjinsky, un homme d'une force morale supérieure. Il restait subordonné au bureau politique, dont les membres avaient des idées bien nettes sur chaque question et savaient les défendre. Tout cela garantissait que la Tcheka demeure l'instrument de la dictature révolutionnaire. Maintenant le parti est étouffé. Sur l'exécution de Blumkin, des milliers et des dizaines de milliers de membres du parti chuchoteront avec horreur dans les coins. A la tête du ~~la~~ Guépécou se trouve Dzerjinsky, pas un homme, mais l'ombre d'un homme. Le rôle principal dans le Guépécou

à suivre p. 3

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est joué par Lugeda, un carriériste détestable qui a lié son sort à celui de Staline et qui est prêt à accomplir sans réfléchir et sans discuter n'importe quel ordre de ce de nier. Le bureau politique n'existe pas. Boukharine a raconté que Staline tient dans ses mains les membres du soi-disant bureau politique à l'aide de dossiers accumulés contre eux par le Guépéou. Dans ces conditions, l'exécution de Blumkine est une affaire personnelle de Staline.

Cet crime incalifiable ne peut passer inaperçu, même dans les conditions présentes de l'omnipotence de l'appareil. Staline ne pouvait pas ne pas pressentir ce résultat par avance, et le fait que malgré sa prudence félonne il s'est décidé à tuer Blumkine démontre combien est grande la peur de cet homme devant l'opposition de gauche. Il ne peut y avoir aucun doute que Blumkine est tombé en victime expiatoire, parce que Radek et autres capitulards n'ont ~~pu~~ pu entraîner avec eux qu'une petite minorité de l'opposition, tandis qu'à l'étranger l'opposition accuse dans différents pays de sérieux succès idéologiques et d'organisation.

Par l'exécution de Blumkine, Staline veut dire à l'opposition internationale des bolcheviks-leninistes qu'il possède à l'intérieur du pays des centaines ~~de~~ et des milliers d'étages qui auront à payer de leur tête les succès du vrai bolchevisme sur l'arène ~~internationale~~ mondiale. En d'autres termes, après les exclusions du parti, après la condamnation de familles à la famine, après les emprisonnements, les déportations, etc., Staline essaye d'effrayer l'opposition par le dernier moyen qui lui reste entre les mains : le meurtre.

On peut dire avec certitude que les résultats seront directement opposés au but que Staline se fixe. Une tendance d'idées historiquement progressive, qui se base sur la logique objective du développement, ne peut être ni effrayée, ni fusillée. Cependant il est clair que l'opposition ne peut pas en envisageant seulement la marche objective des événements se comporter passivement devant la nouvelle, cette fois sanguinaire, étape des représailles thermidoriennes de Staline. Il faut immédiatement ouvrir une campagne internationale dans laquelle chaque oppositionnel doit faire la besogne qui dans d'autres conditions se répartirait sur les épaules de trois, cinq ou dix camarades.

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Comment je me représente la marche de cette campagne ?

Avant tout il faut porter ce fait à la connaissance de tous les communistes et exiger de la direction officielle du parti la confirmation ou le démenti du fait.

D'autant plus décisivement, largement, énergiquement sera posée la question, d'autant plus complètement la direction sera prise à l'improviste et d'autant plus vite on pourra découvrir les dessous de ce fait. Il faut créer une telle atmosphère que de Paris, Berlin, Vienne, Prague, New-York on exige des explications de Moscou.

Que fait-il pour cela ? Avant tout, il me semble, publier un petit tract sur ce thème : "Est-il juste que Staline ait tué le camarade Blumkine ?" Dans ce tract il faut poser aux Cachin, aux Thälmann et Cie carrément les questions suivantes : connaissent-ils ce fait, prennent-ils sur eux la responsabilité du meurtre du révolutionnaire prolétarien par la clique staliniste ?

S'il n'est pas fait de réponse à la première question, comme c'est presque certain, il faudra sans tarder publier un second tract d'un caractère plus offensif et le répandre à des dizaines de milliers d'exemplaires par tous les voies et canaux possibles.

Il est bien possible que Staline es aye, en cas d'une pression dans l'Occident et d'une inquiétude dans le P.C.R., de lancer quelque version envenimée dans le genre des conviènces avec l'officier wrangélien, de la préparation de l'insurrection ou d'actes terroristes. A des ignominies pareilles il faut qu'on soit prêt. C'est à peine pourtant si de telles explications peuvent produire une impression sérieuse. Aussi bien parce qu'elles exhalent l'odeur des manigances de la police bonapartiste que, surtout, parce que dans la lutte avec l'opposition Staline a déjà dépensé les ressources de ce genre. Il n'est pas nécessaire de rappeler que la position de principe qu'occupait Blumkine avec nous tous excluait de sa part l'application dans la lutte de méthodes aventurieuses quelles qu'elles soient.

L'affaire Blumkine doit devenir l'affaire Sacco-Vanzetti de l'opposition communiste de gauche. La lutte pour le salut de nos amis de l'U.R.S.S. doit devenir en même temps la vérification des rangs de l'opposition dans les pays d'Occident. Après avoir accompli une campagne à la manière révolutionnaire, c'est-à-dire avec la plus haute tension des forces et avec le dévouement suprême, l'opposition s'élevera d'un coup d'une tête entière. Cela nous donnera le droit de dire que Blumkine n'a pas donné sa vie en vain.

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Chaque centre d'opposition devrait élaborer soigneusement les premiers pas de la campagne et les préparer minutieusement.

Pour la réalisation pratique des mesures tracées, le mieux serait peut-être de choisir dans chaque endroit une "troïka" avec des pleins pouvoirs, à laquelle tous les membres de l'opposition devraient être subordonnés au cours de cette campagne.

Il n'est pas exclu qu'avant même que cette lettre vous parvienne la presse ait publié de telles informations sur le sort de Blumkine qui rendent inutile la question juridique concernant la confirmation du fait. Il ne restera qu'à constater tout simplement le meurtre et à demander au comité central de chaque parti s'il prend la responsabilité de ce crime devant la classe ouvrière.

Le danger consiste en ce que l'interpellation devienne un tir à blanc, en se réduisant à un tract isolé. Il faut trouver le moyen de poser de nouveau et de nouveau la question et de jeter sans répit cette accusation à la figure des "chefs". Il faut pénétrer dans les réunions du parti, dans les réunions ouvrières en général, il faut préparer des affiches et de petites feuilles volantes de dix lignes, etc., etc.

Cette lettre n'est naturellement pas destinée à la publication. Son contenu peut être utilisé par fragments. Il serait peut-être mieux de publier tout ce qui a trait à l'entrevue entre Blumkine et moi à Constantinople seulement dans le second ou le troisième tract.

Je vous enverrai ultérieurement des matériaux supplémentaires, et en particulier la caractéristique de Blumkine dans la forme nécrologique, quand seront éliminés les derniers détails purement formels sur son sort.

Tout à vous,

L. Trotsky

2 3 5 3  
April, 10, 1930

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE  
COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF AMERICA (OPPOSITION)

Dear Comrades:

The letter below was received from comrades Trotsky and is sent to you. It is understood that these letters are for members of the National Committee, only. We request that you send your comments to the Center as soon as possible.

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Fraternally Yours,

Prinkipo, 26 III 1930

To the Editorial Board of the Militant:

Dear Comrades:

The visit of comrade Shachtman, unfortunately too brief, was a great advantage to me, that is, for my information and contact with the American movement. In my recent letter addressed to Shachtman (I hope you have received it) I expressed the assumption, based upon the Militant itself, that the development of the Opposition had become less rapid and perhaps stagnant. ~~Comrade~~ Comrade Shachtman confirmed that the development, although not stagnant, was however slow. This stage was inevitable after the League had concentrated all the elements prepared by the past for the ideas of the Opposition. Now we have the task of educating a new stratum. That requires a certain time but the second stratum will be more numerous than the first.

In one of my first letters, sent upon the appearance of the Weekly, I expressed the opinion that the League can arrive at the necessity to become an independent Communist Party. The relation of forces explained to me by Shachtman showed me that this "danger" is not imminent. I wish to correct my first assumption, but without any discouragement. If we begin in the United States and Canada with 200 or if we begin with a 1000 members, the difference is almost insignificant. The qualitative difference could be measured only by thousands and not by hundreds.

I learn from Shachtman your financial difficulties, which narrow my picture of a powerful America. The retreat from the Weekly to a semi-monthly would be a certain defeat, and it is necessary, in spite of the summer-time which is approaching, to exert heroic efforts to maintain the Weekly, which has become not only of national ~~importance~~ but of international importance. Unfortunately for the next period we cannot do here all that we would like to do, but we will do all that is possible. Shachtman will inform you of the details.

I have read your platform, although the unexpected departure of Shachtman found me just before the last section of it. At any rate, I have read the most important parts of it. (Unfortunately, I read it belatedly, not even knowing that the American comrades possessed a platform). I find the platform by and large very good. Many parts, on the trade union question, for instance, are excellent. Certain doubts on the slogan of the Labor Party I have already spoken of to comrade Shachtman; but I must study the question further with materials and more details at hand. But, summa summarum, I am sure and convinced that the platform is sufficient to assure the League political success, and the numerous signs indicate that the situation will become favorable for the general proletarian revolutionaries.

I hope that after the visit of Shachtman our relations with you will become

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Au Shactman  
c.-de la direction  
pour la direction  
de la direction

Lettre de L. D. T. à c.-de Nin.

I septembre 1931

Cher ami,

Reçu votre lettre du 25 août. Vous posez devant vous la question, où appeller les ouvriers: dans le Parti ou dans la Fédération? Les conditions locales parlent en faveur de la Fédération. Les conditions générales espagnoles parlent en faveur du Parti. Du point de vue pratique, c'est à dire du point de vue du rapport de forces au moment donné, il est difficile de résoudre le problème, mais il me semble que c'est notre position principielle qui a une importance décisive. Nous nous déclarons fraction du Parti, fraction du Comintern. La lutte principale contre nous se mène sur cette ligne que nous sommes des "ennemis" de l'U.R.S.S. et du Comintern. Même Maurin se nourrit des miettes de cette table. Si nous appelons les ouvriers dans la Fédération, nous nous compromettrons à toute l'échelle espagnole et internationale. Gagnerons-nous d'ailleurs quelque chose à l'échelle de la Catalogne? Si l'on juge sur les résultats présents de la collaboration avec la Fédération, alors ils nous ont porté à mon avis plus de dommage que de profit. Toute la presse du Comintern et avant tout la Pravda nous a rendu responsables de la confusion opportuniste de Maurin. Les articles du camarade Mill dans "La Vérité" y ont beaucoup contribué. Cependant on a été forcé de rompre avec la Fédération en la quittant presque sans rien. En d'autres termes, l'expérience de la collaboration avec la Fédération nous a affaibli à toute l'échelle espagnole et internationale sans presque nous avoir rien donné à l'échelle de la Catalogne. Il est temps de tirer ce bilan. A mon avis, il faut opérer ici un tournant brusque dans la politique, autrement on continuera de nous confondre avec Maurin - avec profit pour lui et dommage pour nous.

Le plus juste serait d'appeler les ouvriers dans la fraction de gauche communiste, de construire ses cellules et d'exiger leur admission dans le Parti. Cela n'exclut aucunement de construire simultanément des cellules dans la Fédération, comme dans le Parti officiel. Mais pour une telle politique, il est nécessaire d'avoir un centre officiel, fut-il petit, de l'opposition de gauche en Catalogne. Si vous vous souvenez, j'ai déjà insisté là-dessus dès le premier jour de votre arrivée à Barcelone, mais hélas, je n'ai pas eu de succès. Et maintenant, je ne vois pas d'autre voie.

Maurin lance le mot d'ordre "tout le pouvoir au prolétariat". Je pense que vous indiquez tout à fait justement qu'il choisit des mots d'ordre de ce genre pour jeter un pont aux syndicalistes et se donner à lui-même l'air plus fort qu'en réalité. Hélas, la poursuite de l'apparence est en politique très forte et dans la politique révolutionnaire très désastreuse. Mais je me demande pourquoi il n'y a pas de soviets en Espagne? Pourquoi le mot d'ordre des "juntas" ne prend-il pas? Où en est la cause? J'ai exprimé dans mes anciennes lettres ~~les considérations~~ quelques considérations à cet égard. Je les ai développées plus amplement dans l'article que je vous ai envoyé sur le contrôle ouvrier en Allemagne. A ce qu'il semble, le mot d'ordre des "juntas" s'identifie dans la conscience des ouvriers espagnols avec le mot d'ordre des soviets et par là il leur paraît trop grave, trop décisif, trop "russe", - c'est à dire qu'il leur paraît tout à fait autre qu'il n'a paru aux ouvriers russes dans la période correspondante. N'assistons-nous pas à un paradoxe historique, quand l'existence des soviets en URSS paralyse la création de soviets dans les pays révolutionnaires? Il faut étudier cette question de la manière la plus attentive, par des entretiens individuels avec des ouvriers dans les différents points du pays. En tous cas, si le mot d'ordre des soviets (juntas) ne prend pas (pas encore?), il faut alors se concentrer sur le mot d'ordre des comités d'usine. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ J'ai écrit à ce propos dans l'article sur le contrôle ouvrier déjà mentionné. Sur la base des comités d'usine, on peut développer l'organisation soviétique sans son nom.

Dans les questions du contrôle ouvrier, vous avez à mon avis absolument raison: renoncer au contrôle ouvrier uniquement parce que les réformistes - en paroles - le veulent, c'est une sottise énorme. Au contraire, c'est justement pour cela qu'il faut de toutes ses forces s'accrocher à ce mot d'ordre, forcer les ouvriers réformistes à le mettre en pratique par la voie du front

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unique avec nous, et sur la base de cette expérience, opposer les ouvriers réformistes à Caballero et autres chenapans.

On n'a réussi à créer les soviets en Russie que parce que cela a été voulu, simultanément avec nous, par les menchéviks et les SR, bien que dans d'autres buts? Nous ne pouvons pas créer de soviets en Espagne justement parce que ni les socialistes, ni les syndicalistes ne veulent des soviets. Cela signifie que sous ce mot d'ordre on ne peut pas créer le front unique et l'unité ~~organique~~ de l'organisation avec la majorité de la classe ouvrière. Mais ici Caballero lui-même, contraint à cela par la pression de la masse, s'accroche au mot d'ordre du contrôle ouvrier et ouvre ainsi la porte à la politique du front unique et à une organisation embrassant la majorité de la classe ouvrière. Il faut s'y accrocher des deux mains. Certainement Caballero ~~voudra~~ voudra transformer le contrôle ouvrier en contrôle des capitalistes sur les ouvriers. Mais cela c'est déjà une question de rapport de forces dans la classe ouvrière. Si nous créons partout des comités d'usine, alors à l'époque révolutionnaire actuelle, messieurs les Caballero perdront la partie définitivement.

Vous signalez que si l'on transforme l'idée de la non-conformité au but, du point de vue ~~organique~~ du prolétariat, de la balkanisation de la péninsule ibérique, et si on en use inconsidérément, on peut prêter soutien au libéralisme madrilène. Vous avez tout à fait raison. Si je ne l'ai pas suffisamment souligné dans ma précédente lettre, alors je suis prêt à le faire avec une force décuplée. En effet, il faut compléter l'analogie entre les deux péninsules. Il y eut un temps où la péninsule ~~ibérique~~ balkanique était unifiée par la domination des seigneurs, des généraux et des fonctionnaires turcs. Le peuple opprimé aspirait à rejeter ses oppresseurs. Si l'on avait opposé à cette aspiration l'idée que nous ne voulons pas de morcellement de la péninsule, ce là aurait signifié être laquais des beys et des pachas turcs. Mais d'autre part, nous savons que les peuples balkaniques libérés du joug turc se sont déchirés les uns les autres pendant des décades. L'avant-garde prolétarienne peut donc dans cette question aussi appliquer le point de vue de la révolution permanente: la libération du joug ~~impérialiste~~ comme élément le plus important de la révolution démocratique mène immédiatement à la ~~révolution~~ Fédération des républiques soviétiques comme la forme étatique de la révolution prolétarienne. Ne s'opposant pas à la révolution démocratique, la soutenant au contraire entièrement, même sous la forme du séparatisme (c'est à dire soutenant la lutte, mais non les illusions), nous apportons en même temps dans la révolution démocratique notre position indépendante, recommandant, conseillant et faisant de la propagande pour l'idée de la Fédération soviétique de la péninsule ibérique comme partie ~~intégrante~~ constituante des Etats-Unis d'Europe. C'est seulement sous cette forme que ma pensée est complète. Il est inutile de dire ~~absolument~~ que les camarades de Madrid et les camarades espagnols en général doivent manifester une prudence toute particulière à l'égard de l'argument de la balkanisation.

J'ai eu le temps bien entendu de me persuader complètement que vous avez eu ~~absolument~~ absolument raison dans votre appréciation de Gorkine qui s'est confirmée à 100 %.

quant aux affaires françaises, je déplore seulement que vous n'ayiez pas eu la possibilité de suivre suffisamment leur développement. A Rosmer, il paraît certainement que ses adversaires inventent des divergences. Cela ne produit parce que Rosmer s'arrête là. La question ne fait que commencer. Cet homme a de très bonnes qualités personnelles et un passé très respectable. Mais il a trois défauts : 1° il n'est pas marxiste, 2° il n'est pas révolutionnaire, 3° il n'est pas politique. Il faut des conditions exceptionnellement favorables pour le soulever de ce niveau politique auquel il est habitué, dans lequel il s'est éduqué - niveau des cercles français sectaires épuisés, privés de vie, achevant d'user leurs vieilles idées sans enthousiasme, sans foi dans l'avenir, sans perspective. La révolution russe a temporairement soulevé Rosmer. Ici son intimité avec moi a joué un certain rôle. Mais il a saisi (inconsciemment) le premier prétexte plausible pour s'éloigner de la révolution. La nouvelle rencontre à Constantinople a de nouveau servi d'impulsion. Mais après son départ j'ai dit des dizaines de fois aux miens: je crains que ce ne soit pas pour longtemps que cette charge suffira. Il s'est trouvé qu'effectivement elle n'a pas suffi pour long temps.

La contradiction entre le rôle qu'il a commencé de jouer et tout son caractère, toute sa "mentalité", comme disent les français, l'a mené à des actions telles que, selon moi, elles ne peuvent se concilier avec la dignité d'un révolutionnaire. Ses deux lettres à propos de M. resteront pour toujours comme des taches sur la physionomie morale de Rosmer. Il reproche à M. ses affaires "financières". Mais justement dans ce domaine, M. manifeste une nature tout à fait exceptionnellement révolutionnaire. Il est indubitablement un commerçant très capable. Il l'a prouvé en fait en s'occupant d'affaires commerciales ensemble avec son frère. Mais est-ce que vous connaissez par exemple ce fait que j'ai connu par hasard qu'en partant chez vous, il n'a pas payé le loyer. Il a vendu le mobilier du logement de sa mère morte récemment et a envoyé son vieux père habitué à un certain confort dans une chambre meublée. Au nom de quoi tout ça ? Personnellement il habite archi-modestement et s'en tire maintenant par le travail de nuit comme chauffeur (c'est un bon chauffeur). Où donc va l'argent de ses opérations commerciales "brillantes" ? Uniquement pour les besoins de l'organisation. Dès le moment où il a occupé une position marquante dans la Ligue. Cela a d'un seul coup diminué les revenus, mais son frère continue largement à soutenir l'organisation. Je vous demande: quel philistin désespéré faut-il être pour faire de tout cela des reproches ? A Rosmer, les ~~activités~~ précédées commerciales des frères M. ne plaisent pas, voyez-vous. Il distingue le commerce honnête, solide, respectable, et le commerce indigne... d'un communiste ! Le vieil Engels écrivait un jour à un proche analogue, à un philistin allemand, à peu près dans ce genre: "Oui, si je savais que je puisse maintenant gagner à la Bourse un petit million dans l'intérêt du mouvement révolutionnaire, je m'occuperais sur-le-champ de cette affaire. Quand j'ai mentionné un jour ce fait dans une lettre à Rosmer, il m'a répondu: mais M. n'est pas Engels. Que peut-on faire ici ?... Le défaut de M. consiste en ce qu'il est un homme extrêmement explosif, il se précipite de faire d'un seul coup tout pour tout le monde, ne demandant pas aux autres et sans retourner vers eux. Par cela, il dressa souvent contre lui-même non seulement de mauvais, mais de tout à fait bons camarades, qui exigent des méthodes plus normales et démocratiques de travail. Sur ce terrain j'ai eu des heurts avec lui, et je crains d'en avoir encore dans l'avenir."

Ses divergences avec Rosmer ont commencé presque depuis le premier jour de son retour de Prinkipo à Paris. Retombant dans l'ancien milieu, il a presque automatiquement rétabli les anciennes liaisons et habitudes de pensée. La "Vérité" a pris d'un seul coup une tendance syndicaliste éclatante. A propos de Mac Donald et de son parti, Rosmer n'écrivit pas autrement que dans l'esprit qu'ils "ne comprennent pas" comment il faut défendre les intérêts de la classe ouvrière. Si Cuvier déterminait les animaux selon leur choix, alors d'après ces deux mots "ne comprennent pas", on peut déterminer le type mental de Rosmer. Il considérait le Parti d'un côté, la Vérité d'un autre. Il n'éprouvait aucunement le besoin d'une organisation internationale. Il l'a considérée plutôt comme une charge. Il protégeait Overstraten, les bordiguistes, tout ce qui est confus, informe, y cherchant un point d'appui à son propre manque de force. S'il s'agissait d'un jeune camarade, on pourrait bien entendu se dire: il apprendra. Malheureusement tous les autres ont attendu de Rosmer qu'il leur apprenne et ils ont été très vite désenchantés. D'où le conflit des éléments vivants et révolutionnaires avec le groupe Rosmer-Seville. Persuadant, critiquant



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EXTRACTS FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF MIN AND TROTSKY AND OF TROTSKY AND MIN

• • •

By Way of Preface

Comrade Min, who is in practically permanent conflict with the leadership of the International Opposition and with the leaders of all the other sects, at the same time denies the existence of theoretical or political differences. He often refers in this sense to his correspondence with me, incidentally without giving details. But in reality my correspondence with comrade Min, which has lasted two years and a half, was nothing else but a constant polemic, in spite of its most friendly form. This polemic covered almost all the questions that deal with the life and the activity of the International Opposition. It is true that comrade Min formally accepted the fundamental premises, but when the situation called for it, he always refused to draw from them the necessary conclusions. He held back for a long time the formation of the Spanish Opposition. He did everything to isolate it and to oppose it to the International Opposition. I am sorry that I cannot reproduce the whole correspondence; it would make a large volume. Two comrades who help me in my work have undertaken to select the most characteristic extracts. It is regrettable to have to losstime on such work, unless the Spanish comrades attentively take note of these extracts in order better to understand the history of the differences and to help the International Opposition to lead its Spanish section into the right road.

Printed

Prinkipo February 21, 1933

L. R. Trotsky

EXTRACTS FROM MIN'S LETTERS TO TROTSKY

October 23, 1930

In France I saw vor few people. Thanks to you I informed myself as to the internal situation of the Opposition. For their part, they had spoken to me about it only very vaguely, presenting to me the existing disharmony as having a purely personal character. As for the rest, they are satisfied with the work.

Now we have: 1. The official Party, which has no effective force, and no authority among the masses; 2. the Communist Federations of Catalonia and Valencia, which have been excluded from the Party and which in reality, together with the most influential groups of Asturia and a few other places constitute in fact an independent Party...3. the Catalonian Communist Party, which has a good elite leadership, counts on a certain influence among the dock-workers of Barcelona and dominates the workers' movement in Lerida, and 4. the Left Opposition. The latter has no force in Catalonia..

\* \* \*

November 12, 1930

The situation in France disturbs me very much. A split in our ranks would have catastrophic results. Let us hope that an agreement which you have recently reached will not prove momentary and that work in common will be possible. Personally I am very little in touch with the existing differences. Your letters have contributed a little to my orientation. I am expecting letters which the French comrades have told me about in order to form a more complete idea of the situation.

Official Communist Party: It has some branches in Biscay, Asturia, and in Andalusia. Its authority is nil...

Catalan-Balearcic Communist Federation: Until very recently it belonged to the official Party. Its most prominent leader is Maurin. On his arrival in

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Spain the C. C., which has never regarded this comrade favorably (for in spite of his positions he is a very intelligent and above all a very honest comrade), asked him to make a declaration against "Trotskyism" and to renounce his "former errors". He refused to give this declaration and then was expelled. The Catalan Federation having declared its solidarity with him, was expelled in a bloc...

The Federation has an organ, a weekly, "La Battalla", with a circulation of 8,000. The paper is highly confusionist...For this reason no great importance should be given to the publication in its pages of the unfortunate report of Stalin. They published this as they might have published anything else. Perhaps it was put in for lack of copy. This same paper for instance on the anniversary day of the October published the pictures of the leaders of the Revolution, and among them yours...

The difficulty of our task results from the fact that we have not yet a Party...with people whom we have to teach the first notions of Communism, we cannot begin by making Opposition propaganda...In Spain, I repeat, there is no Party...in the unified Party or in the existing groups we will demand our right to defend our position. A few words on Maurin. I don't know whether you know that I am bound to him by a very old friendship. Maurin is very close to us and I am sure that he will end up in a short time by declaring himself for the Opposition. That would be an acquisition of great value, for, as I have told you, he is very well thought of and very honest. We could spoil everything if we were to attack him in a manner that was too unjustified...

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December 3, 1930

I am convinced that with us the proletariat will organize its Party outside of the official Party(which does not exist in fact), and in spite of it...

I would like to say a few words to you on the French matters but this letter is already too long and I reserve the subject for a future letter.

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January 17, 1931

...And we reach an essential question. Here the Party will be formed outside of the official Party...

I should add that the Catalan Federation counts on the sympathy of the best elements in the rest of Spain and that a joint action is quite possible.

My own conduct seems quite clear to me (and I say to me because I am officially the only member of the Left Opposition here; I ought to enter the Federation. Andrade and Lacroix, the best elements that we have in Spain, share my opinion. I have already carried on negotiations and I shall surely be admitted, naturally without giving up my position in any way...We must act with a certain tact. Most of the militants (except Maurin, who is the most intelligent and is really with us), say they are not with the Opposition; but (an astonishing thing!) they are sure without suspecting it; when I don't speak to them about the Opposition but explain to them our point of view on the essential questions of strategy, tactics and organization, they show they are in agreement with us... Here is a striking example. Next month there will take place the Unification Congress. Maurin is charged with the task of drawing up the theses on the political question and the tasks of the Party. Well, taking advantage of the fact that we are "neighbors" (he lives next door to me), we are drawing up the theses together...it would be stupid to give up a joint action when it is possible on a political platform which is completely acceptable.

...Now a few words on the French crisis. I subscribe completely to your theses. But I must confess to you that I still orientate myself a little poorly on the real causes of the crisis. Komner wrote me a long letter several weeks ago to prove to me that he had no divergences in principle and that everything was confined to the incommutability between them and M. whom he represents as a "queered" fellow, very much discredited in the French labor movement. It must be said that other comrades--who do not belong to the Opposition--have expressed the same opinion to me. What have you to say about that? That naturally does not reach to the bottom of the question, but it also has its importance. Moreover I am at pains to assert that I share your opinion on M. He suffers a little from the malady of many French militants, which is the result of their lack of direct contact with the working masses...

X X X

January 26, 1931.

I speak of a fundamental coincidence because I do not entirely share your viewpoint in detail...Let us begin with the question of the Cortes...Should we boycott them? Among the Republicans there is opinion very favorable to abstention...If the majority of the opposition parties boycott the parliament, I think that the Communists will have to do the same...

You speak of my candidacy. The Catalan Communist Federation (this is the section which has broken with the C. I., whose leader is Maurin) should be unified without much trouble at a congress and should fix upon a line for the elections. The Barcelona section and the provisory Executive Committee have accepted the theses presented by Maurin and me (I edited them almost in their entirety), and have decided to present candidates in several places in cases where the opposition parties do not decide upon a boycott. One of the resolutions adopted is to present my candidacy in the Vendrell district...

An indispensable condition for success is the pitiless struggle against the republican parties. Since my arrival we have advanced a good deal in this direction. When I arrived, not only the anarcho-syndicalists but also a good section of the Communists were following at the tail of the "Left" bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. That has come to an end.

X X X

February 5, 1931.

We are entirely in agreement on the general line and I am greatly overjoyed at this. The political theses of the Catalan Communist Federation, I think you have said, which were edited by Maurin and me, are inspired in exactly the same sense. I add yet more: the Federation has entrusted me with editing the official reply in the pages of "La Batalla" to the "Political Declaration" of the Party. Is that not interesting?

X X X

March 7, 1931.

I should have struggled energetically against the idea of creating a "Workers' and Peasants' Party". This idea has now been definitely rejected. Moreover I could not prevent the adoption of a project for the creation of a "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc". But I have succeeded in obtaining the necessary guarantees. The Bloc will be provisory, its program will be that of the Party...

The Catalan Federation considers that my direct adherence in the latter may aggravate its relations with the C. I. This is correct. But we have found a formula: I shall adhere to the Bloc and, as a member of the latter, I shall participate in all the meetings. On the other hand I will write every week in "La Batalla" under a pseudonym. If the rupture with the C. I. becomes definite

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(and that is inevitable), I would immediately be admitted into the Federation.

I am completely ignorant of divergences existing among us (the members of the Spanish Opposition). Nobody has ever said anything to me about them. It is certainly extraordinary! At least if there were some differences, that would indicate the Opposition is alive.

x x x

March 15, 1931.

In April we shall have (or ought to have) municipal elections... Here we shall have a Communist candidacy presented under the banner of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (a "Communist" candidacy would not be authorized, for the Party is illegal)... Despite this formality, the Bloc will be presented under an openly Communist platform... After all probabilities are weighed, I should be a candidate.. The candidacy is composed of members of the Catalan-Sealetic Federation, of the "Catalan Party" group which has not fused with the latter, and myself. Therefore this is the first essay at a Communist united front. I also proposed to invite the official Party. My proposal met with a good deal of resistance, but it is not impossible that it may ultimately be accepted...

Recently I received your letter on the German crisis which has interested me tremendously. I must admit to you that I see more clearly in this crisis than in that of the French Opposition...

x x x

April 4, 1931.

Open propoganda for the principles of the Opposition has provoked my rupture with the Catalan Federation or, to put it better, with its leaders. The workers hold a very different attitude and demonstrate obvious sympathy with me...

x x x

April 5, 1931. Nin's Letter to the International Secretariat.

The crisis of the Left Opposition in Germany may have disastrous consequences for the entire future of our movement, if we do not adopt energetic and speedy measures. We can strike at the roots of the crisis by the effective means that the methods of democratic centralism offer us. In this sense the proposals formulated by comrade Trotsky in his letter of February 17 appear entirely correct and I hereby unreservedly associate myself with them.

Note by Trotsky: This proposal (Trotsky-Nin) was accepted. After that Nin accused the International Opposition of having a false policy toward Landau.

x x x

April 10, 1931.

...Let us pass on to the "well-known" differences with the Madrid comrades... As it appears, it is on the question of my so-called unconditional entrance into the Catalan Federation that the most serious difference existed. Seeing that the Madrid comrades have never said anything on this subject, I cannot clarify wherein these differences lie...

x x x

April 13, 1931.

In my opinion if we should begin by suddenly attacking the Federation with violence, the results would be utterly regrettable... We must enter the Federation, carry on systematic work in it and create our fraction in it. That is quite possible. I am certain that, if my entrance is not possible today, it

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soon will be, perhaps before <sup>a</sup> the month.

x x x

April 15, 1931.

...The Catalan Federation has come to ask my aid. I could not refuse it, so here I am working in an immediate manner (actually in a large measure leading) in the Central Committee of the organization...We publish a daily sheet of which I am editor...

x x x

May 25, 1931.

Your fears are exaggerated so far as concerns the possibility of premature action in Catalonia...The entire tactic of the anarcho-syndicalists who exercise hegemony over the movement consists in checking the actions of the proletariat. As for the Communists, the Catalan Federation (the only one here which can be reckoned as a Communist force) has a quite correct conception (exactly like ours) of the movement and is decidedly antagonistic to all adventurist or putschist policies...

x x x

June 25, 1931.

...The Catalan Federation, whose policies I do not defend and have never defended did not adopt a policy of conciliation toward the anarcho-syndicalists...

x x x

June 29, 1931.

(The Catalan Federation) Its orientation is as always, variable, indefinite. My relations with its leaders have evolved through various stages: collaboration, rupture, new collaboration, new rupture. Right now we stand in the latter situation...up to the Unification Congress (the dots are Min's).

x x x

July 7, 1931.

In a few days the supplementary elections will take place at Barcelona... There have been official understandings between the left (of Lluís) and Maurin. The former will officiously support the latter, and it is almost by means of this that he will be elected...The left officiously made some gestures to me to present my candidacy. I replied that I shall accept only in case I should be presented by the Catalan Federation and on condition that the left would make no gesture in favor of my candidacy. The Federation naturally presented Maurin. There still remained the province of Barcelona where three deputies are to be elected. The Federation is presenting no candidates. Friends in the province proposed to me that I should be presented as an "independent Communist", but I refused flatly...

x x x

July 15, 1931.

...For the 3rd number of the Review I wrote an article against the mistakes of Maurin. We cannot maintain silence on them without the greatest danger for the movement. The electoral campaign which the Bloc has carried on these last few days has had very little of a Communist nature...

x x x



July 15, 1931.

We are still a very small nucleus in Spain...We work in perfect agreement and with the greatest enthusiasm...Of the I. S. comrades I know only Mill. He made a good impression on me. I have heard the most contradictory opinions on H. and F. and I ought to declare to you that I incline more to the side of the less favorable reports. But, I repeat, all this is merely suppositions--presentiments. And I still do not judge myself informed enough to express a definite opinion as I did for example on Germany, because I knew the persons and saw clearly in the conflict.

A few words on one of the points which wrongly suggests disturbances to you, where you see in my attitude some "elements" of "diplomacy". I want to speak of Rosmer's visit. I must tell you above all that I am convinced of having spoken to you about it. But, in actuality, there was no important matter to speak of. He was sober enough in his judgment and did not express himself as far as the Spanish affairs are concerned in the sense which you indicate. On the French questions he related some things to me which I knew well enough. And I must tell you sincerely that on these questions I still do not see clearly enough. I must see Kolizier and Frank personally and talk with them...

x x x

July 20, 1931.

If we could only have a weekly at Barcelona! It would rapidly become an organizing center. If I had 3,000 pesetas, I would spend it immediately...

x x x

August 25, 1931.

I have the opportunity of establishing Communist organizations here in several cities. To what organization should they adhere? To the Bloc or to the official Party? I have a good deal of hesitation on this point. To make them adhere to the official party is quite difficult, for there is practically no organization in Catalonia. On the other hand the political position of the Bloc is at present so false that it is no less difficult to advise their adherence to this organization. Still I am inclined in favor of this second solution...

For us the most important task is now the publication of the weekly. M. passed by here and will pass by again in two or three days. We shall see the *met, all* three together with Lacroix at Barcelona, in order definitely to settle the plan of work. He has already supplied a little money...

A few words on the French situation. Either I expressed myself very poorly (which is quite possible, for due to lack of time I write with great precipitation) or else you did not understand me well. I certainly do not subordinate (which would be absurd) the political questions to personal questions. I merely believe (and you do too in my opinion) that persons play a big role. I have not had the time to make a thorough study of the documents concerning the French question. I am in the act of doing that right now and it is surely due to this circumstance that I do not see clearly enough. Your manner of viewing the trade-union problem seems absolutely correct to me, generally speaking. But I still have been unable to estimate to what extent the errors which you indicate actually exist. And it is here that the personal problems may play a role. Sometimes we attribute to people concepts which they have never held. This is not an accusation which I make against you (that is the furthest thing from my intentions); but this hypothesis is not excluded on the French side. I repeat it: these are only conjectures. A profound study of the documents will undoubtedly help me to arrive at precise conclusions. On the other hand I have known M. (a circumstance which has its importance) and I must tell you that the impression he produced on me was excellent. I shall not fail to acquaint you with my definite opinion. As far as Rosmer is concerned I completely share your viewpoints...

2362

September 6, 1931.

I insist upon thinking that our most urgent task is the founding of a weekly organ of struggle at Barcelona...

P. S. All the letters in the list you sent me have arrived.

X X X

September 18, 1931.

During these last two weeks I have thoroughly studied all the documents concerning the French question. I have spoken at greater length on this question with M. who, as you know, is among us. And truly all my doubts have been dispelled. I am now convinced that the right is not on the side of Rosmer and Laville (I did not see Rosmer this time). Moreover I was very glad to become acquainted with M. all of whose devotion I appreciate, and whom I regard as a genuine revolutionary... I must confess to you that what Rosmer said about M. produced a certain impression on me. But, I repeat, I no longer have any doubts on the matter. M.'s position seems to me absolutely correct and I estimate the acquisition of militants like him as a great benefit to the Opposition...

We have considered at length with some comrades from Barcelona as well as M. and Lacroix the problem of the eventual adherence of the organizations to the Bloc or the Party. Naturally, from a principle point of view, you are right; we must make them adhere to the Party. But the complexity of our situation demands a combined solution. At Barcelona, we shall make everyone adhere to the Party; in the Catalonian Provinces we shall make them adhere to the Bloc. Here, for the time being, is the only possible solution. In the first place, it would be difficult to make the organizations adhere to the Party (they would not want to go into it); in the second place because--do not forget this--in Catalonia the Party actually does not exist. In all these groups the best elements are with us and under our leadership they will be able to contribute actively to the decomposition of the Bloc. We considered it absolutely inadmissible and impossible to make these groups adhere to the Opposition and to demand of them that they adhere to the Party. In the first place it is not a question of groups composed of Oppositionists but of recent Communists among whom there are some Oppositionists. Even in cases where we should be able to make them adhere integrally to the Opposition (should that be desirable) we ought not to be inclined toward that solution; they would not be admitted into the official Party and in fact we would be laying the bases of a new Party. Inside the Bloc these groups will be a very fruitful basis of work for us; they will be the pioneers for unity and the most implacable adversaries of the policy of the leadership. It is true that for the tactic which you recommend you consider an Opposition centre in Catalonia necessary. And you add textually: "If you recall I have insisted upon the above since the first day of your arrival in Barcelona; but, alas, I met with no success." Now we have that center. That it was necessary I have never doubted. But to achieve it we required almost a year.

X X X

October 7, 1931.

~~Earlier~~ Some other day I will write to you at length on the question of a "narrow" or "broad" fraction. I have translated your letter and we are going to discuss it in our organizations. I prefer to transmit my ~~opinion~~ personal opinion to you along with that of all the comrades. Nevertheless I am taking pains to inform you that I do not share your viewpoint which seems to me to be dictated by insufficient information on the situation...

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November 7th, 1931. Letter to the I.S.

The persecution of which the governor made "El Soviet" the object allowed us to suspend publication in an "honorable" manner...

Indeed, we foresaw all the difficulties to which we were exposing ourselves. In accordance with this, and because of it, we did not rush the weekly publication sooner. But comrade Molinier made us solemn promises in the name of the I.S....

But these promises remained thin air, and our economic situation became grave. The one directly culpable for all this is comrade Molinier who acted with unjustifiable irresponsibility...

Truly, a conscious saboteur of the Opposition could not have done better than Molinier.

X X X ~~Comradely~~

November 24th, 1931.

Undoubtedly the I. S. has sent you a copy of the letter I mailed it on this subject (the suspension of "El Soviet")....It is my purpose solely to add that the Spanish Opposition is unanimous in asserting the ruinous role that M. is playing in the French ~~Eng~~ Ligue and in the International Opposition. All the information I possess (in addition to your own experiences) confirms me in this opinion...

Our work is proceeding very well, and there is not the least difference among us. (in the Spanish section).

There are no differences on the question of "broad" fractions. It was a misunderstanding among us and nothing more...

X X X

December 7th, 1932

You say that the present regime in Spain can be compared to "Kerenskyism"....I do not think so. "Kerenskyism" was the bourgeoisie's last card. It was the announcement for October. Azana announces ~~Lorfour~~, that is, Miliukov, the big bourgeoisie...

X X X

February 7th, 1933

I have nothing further to add to what I have written you in my previous letters on the question which causes our differences. What makes the situation especially serious is not its political aspect, but its personal aspect. In the case of France, that has decisive importance...

X X X

June 7th, 1932 (<sup>between</sup> from two letters, one of March 12th and one of May 20th)

Your letter of May 29th surprised me excessively through its tone and content. I had made a sincere effort to resume correspondence whose usefulness for our movement (each day more important) is incontestable. I did not find the same good will on your part....Your direct collaboration is precious to us; But even without it (since you refuse it) we are consecrating all our energies up to the present to the task of creating a strong Left Communist force in Spain...

I am still trying to emphasize that there is no political difference among us, and that it is very unfortunate that the fact that we do not share your opinion on a French militant

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actual

(militant?)...has determined ~~at~~ break, the responsibility for which rests entirely with you...

x x x

November 25, 1932.

Neither the Spanish Opposition as such, nor I personally have ever said that the Spanish Revolution was finished. This is an incredible monstrosity. We consider the publication of a resolution from the C. C. on this matter entirely superfluous, for no one here has accused us of having supported a viewpoint which is in fundamental opposition to our political position.

x x x

EXTRACTS FROM TROTSKY'S LETTERS TO NIN

September 13, 1930.

...I have no doubt that in Paris you will be put in touch with the internal struggle of the Ligue. That is why I found it necessary to expound for you my viewpoint on this question...

If you enter into all these internal matters in Paris (I think you should do so), it is necessary that you hear both sides. I would be pleased if you would write me the detailed impressions you bring away from it.

Note by comrade Trotsky.--Nin did not do this, confining himself to a conversation with the Rosmer group.

x x x

November 21, 1930.

Insofar as the Western European Opposition generally has not lived a permanent ideological and political life, has not reacted to the important questions, has not mingled in the Party's internal life, its casual followers (Urbahne, ~~MSK~~, Overstraten, Souvarine, Paz) were able to appear to themselves and others as our partisans. But at bottom they contributed the greatest ~~prejudices~~ <sup>damage</sup> by blocking the road to the ideas of the Left Opposition in the Party, which they all declared liquidated and dead, conceding that this is much simpler and offers the opportunity of living peaceably in a corner, to devote one hour a week to Oppositionist conversations...

In your letter occurs the sentence: "A split in France would have catastrophic consequences for us." Obviously every split has an abnormal character. Obviously the withdrawal of ~~Swiss~~ comrade Rosmer would deal a blow to "La Verite", and personally, for my part, I am ready to do everything to avoid that. It is in this sense that I wrote to the French comrades and to B, himself. But I must say that such a split can not be catastrophic for us...

In order that the small national groups, without adequate theoretical basis, without traditions, without experience, may not lose themselves on the road in the process of patient clarification, there must be a firm link between them, there must be continuous reciprocal verification, there must be organized ideological control, there must be double and triple ideological implacability, ...

You write that Landau announced your correspondence without authorization. But, in that ~~case~~, where did he obtain your correspondence?...

x x x

x x x

November 29, 1930.

...You speak of the backwardness of the Spanish workers and of the necessity for making them acquainted with the fundamental ideas of Communism before posing the questions of the Left Opposition...

For myself, I assert that I do not consider myself able to hold a conference on Communism with the most backward workers without at the same time posing the questions of the Left Opposition... If I were to hold a conference on Communism with the most backward groups of workers, Spanish or others, I would mark out the road from the very beginning by the following declaration: "There are several currents in Communism. I belong to such and such a current and I shall expound to you how this current conceives the tasks of the working class." In conclusion, I should summon the workers to join the organization which defended the viewpoints I had just expounded. Without that, propaganda and agitation acquire an academic character, are deprived of an organizational axis and ultimately lately give aid to our adversaries, i. e., the Centrists and right wingers...

*Lecture*

x x x

December 12, 1930

I think that even though the Left Opposition may be weak, if it takes upon itself the initiative of posing the political (agrarian) and organizational problems of the Revolution, it can in a very short space of time occupy the leading position in the movement. I shall say to you frankly that I greatly fear lest the historian of the future should have to accuse the Spanish revolutionaries of not having known how to take advantage of an exceptional revolutionary situation.

x x x

January 12, 1931.

...According to the press, the bourgeois opposition parties are preparing to boycott the elections to the Cortes. All the more then should the workers have recourse to the tactic of the boycott. In the immediate situation, it certainly appears that we could invalidate Berenguer's elections by an energetically applied boycott tactic; in 1905, that was how we invalidated the election of a legislative Duma which was merely consultative. What is the policy of the Communists on this point? Do they distribute pamphlets on this subject? any appeals? any proclamations?...

x x x

~~February 5, 1931~~  
~~January 31, 1931.~~

As for the boycott, I do not regard myself as convinced... The Communists obviously committed an error by failing to take the initiative in the boycott. They alone had the power, together with the revolutionary workers in general, to give audacity and combativeness to the boycott campaign. However it seems obvious to me that opinions in the bourgeois opposition parties are very largely disposed to favor the boycott; in this fact is manifested the symptom of profound ferment in the popular masses. The latest telegrams appear to confirm the fact that the Republicans and Socialists have pronounced themselves in favor of the boycott. If the Communists had vigorously lashed them at the proper time, the Republicans and Socialists would have infinitely more difficulty in renouncing this plan for a boycott...

*original letter of January 31, which has been placed after this letter by mistake.*

x x x



January 31, 1931.

...From a revolutionary viewpoint, the question is resolved in this manner: does the Catalan Party aspire to political and organizational independence? or has it really considered itself from the beginning as a regional organization of the Spanish Party? We can allow federalism in the state but under no circumstances in the Party...

Although the official Party at it is today may be feeble and insignificant, nevertheless it possesses all the external, historic possibilities in it--in Russia and everything which is linked up with the USSR. That is why to guide yourself empirically solely on the immediate relation of forces seems dangerous to me.

The entrance of the Left Communists into larger and broader organizations is justified in Spain more than anywhere else by the condition of the Communist ranks on the one hand, by the revolutionary situation on the other. But this tactic creates the immediate danger of the dissolution of the Left Oppositionists in other currents and fractions. That is why the creation of a center of the Left Opposition seems to me the necessary ~~condition~~ and urgent condition for the entrance of the Lefts in other organizations. A paper for the Left Opposition, and an internal bulletin, these are necessary.

x x x

February 13, 1931.

...The fact that the Catalan Federation entrusts you with the editing of its principal documents, including therein the reply to the Party's political declaration, is a very valuable conquest which holds much promise...

But nevertheless I am renewing my proposal concerning the publishing at Madrid (or in another city) of a Bulletin of the Spanish Left Opposition such as a politically and theoretically solid monthly organ... Without that, the new stage of the Revolution can catch the Left Opposition off its guard and, with the weakness of the Party and the confusion of the Catalan Federation, that could bring about the most terrific irreparable disasters...

x x x

February 15, 1931.

Unfortunately the Communists were not the nymphs of the ballet... That is why they did not achieve any important conquests in the campaign of the last two or three months. During those periods when the revolutionary flux becomes impetuous the authority of the Party grows rapidly, feverishly, on condition that, in the decisive turns, at the new stages, the Party advances the necessary slogan, whose correctness will soon be confirmed by events... In the course of the last months, of the last weeks, occasions have been allowed to escape. But what is the use of looking back at the past? We must look ahead of us. The Revolution is only at the beginning of its development. We can win back a hundred-fold what we have allowed to be lost... It is indispensable immediately to create a well-organized fraction, however small it may be to begin with, of the Left Opposition, which will publish its Bulletin and will have its organic group of theoreticians. Of course, that does not exclude the possibility of Left Communists participating in broader organizations; on the contrary, it presupposes such participation, but, at the same same time, that is not the indispensable condition.

x x x

Madrid, 1931.

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March 1, 1931.

...The political experience of the Beranger period demonstrates that the proletarian Party must firmly adopt a position of boycott on the admiral's Cortes. The socialists, the Republicans can abandon the positions of boycott assumed by them if they are not continually driven to the left. At the present stage of the Revolution, the Communist organization can play the role of a small but strong flywheel which compels all the toothed gear wheels of the Socialists, Republicans and even the partisans of the Constituent Cortes to revolve--in order that the flywheel may not break the teeth of the Socialist and constitutional wheels.

We must put forward the slogan of an active boycott: that does not mean simply abstaining from participation in the elections but developing an energetic offensive to smash the falsely constituted Cortes (by public meetings, proclamations, demonstrations, denouncing the names of the official candidates as enemies of the people, public boycott of those participating in the election, etc.). I think the ~~importance~~ importance of an active boycott would allow the creation of Workers' Boycott Committees which, at the opportune moment, could be transformed into Workers' Juntas...

In my preceding letters, I wrote in detail on the cohesion of the Left Opposition and on its attitude toward the official Party. I do not know whether you have received my letters and I am waiting impatiently for you to inform me of your viewpoints on these questions and the practical measures taken by you and your comrades. Questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics have a meaning only on condition that there exists "the subjective factor" of this strategy, i. e., a revolutionary organization, even very small in numbers at the start...

x x x

March 15, 1931.

...How will your participation in the Bloc be defined and politically explained? As that of a representative of a Communist fraction or as that of a revolutionist known to be isolated? It is possible that some elements of the Federation, in case of need for them to reach an agreement with the bureaucracy of the C. I., will later declare that they formed a bloc with the peasantry and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie in the person of Nin. To exist without a political passport, especially during the revolution, is very dangerous...

x x x

March 29, 1931.

I receive from Paris letters showing more and more uneasiness on the subject of the situation in Spain. I must tell you that I share this uneasiness. In Spain the situation is Revolutionary; in Spain we have entirely qualified representatives of the Left Opposition. By correspondence, articles, etc., we have elaborated something like a draft platform of the Left Opposition. All eyes are turned toward Spain. And yet the Left Opposition as an official and active organization does not exist in Spain. And every day lost will have heavy repercussions in the decisive moments. Nobody outside of the Left Opposition is capable of giving a correct orientation nor of laying down a proper policy in the revolutionary conditions in Spain. And yet the Left Opposition does not exist; that provokes uneasiness among many of the comrades, and I share that uneasiness...

Where is the way out? The Madrid comrades believe that with the assistance

of the Asturian comrades it is possible to publish a monthly theoretical paper. They are also ready to publish a Bulletin of the Left Fraction. It seems to me that we must support them with all our forces. By preserving a permanent liaison between you and Madrid on the one hand, between Spain, Paris and Constantinople on the other, we can achieve the necessary political, theoretical and organizational harmony. I await your reply on this question with a good deal of impatience, all the more so because my previous letters have remained unanswered on this point...

The presentation of your candidacy in the municipal elections is obviously a very important point. But you will manifestly agree with me that in politics, above all during the Revolution, only those conquests are important which are translated into the growth of the Party or, in the immediate case, of the fraction. Without that the tempest of the Revolution will completely sweep away the individual initiative, in the event of victory for the Revolution as well as in the event of defeat...

x x x

April 31, 1931.

...I am extremely pleased at your conference and your successes. Your intention of occupying yourself during your trip with the organization of a Left Oppositionist fraction gives me perhaps even more hope. It is important to have a crystal prepared; the development of the Revolution will create a saturated solution...

x x x

April 13, 1931.

I have just received your letter in which you inform me for the first time of your break with the Catalan Federation and the appearance in a short while of an organ of the Left Opposition, "Comunismo". The latter news fills me with so much joy that I refuse to regret the several months lost in the matter of forming a Left Opposition. I do not doubt that you will win back a hundred times the period of time lost...

x x x

April 20, 1931.

...In your second letter you show the necessity of influencing the Catalan Federation and a friendly manner and tactfully. I am fully in agreement with you...

But I cannot fail to emphasize from here, from far off, the second side of the matter. Two or three months ago you estimated that the organization would be won over by you with no difficulties; together with Maria you elaborated the thesis, etc. A little while later it was asserted that the Federation, because of its equivocal relations with the C. I., finds your direct entrance into its ranks inopportune. This record is in my eyes a ~~reproach against the attempts to influence the Federation in any way~~ personally, individually, pedagogically --in the lack of an organized Left Fraction acting everywhere with its own banner displayed. Work inside of the Federation? Certainly, yes. Work patiently, in a friendly manner, without fear of being checked? Yes, yes, yes. But work openly, as an accredited Left Oppositionist, as a Bolshevik-Leninist belonging to a fraction, and as one who demands for it the freedom of criticism and of expounding his opinions.

x x x

April 22, 1931.

The most important information in your letter is the fact of your entrance into the Central Committee of the Catalan Federation and the editing by you of the daily publication of the Federation: I cannot state what tremendous significance this fact has. Only the political premises are unfortunately not clear to me. Several weeks ago by, you wrote that you were obliged to break with the Federation because its leaders considered that your adherence to the Left Opposition was incompatible with adherence to the Federation. In other words, the leaders showed themselves extremely hostile to us and employed the methods and phraseology of the Stalinist bureaucracy. After that, your entrance at the end of several weeks into the leading positions of the Federation, I assure you, disorientates me to a large extent. What has happened to the Federation? Has the composition of its leaders changed? Has their ~~spiritual~~ *state of mind* position radically altered under the influence of the Republican overthrow and the general sharp wearing down of all consciences? Have they lost the hope of being reconciled with the bureaucracy of the C. I.? On what conditions did you enter the Federation? On all these questions I shall await your reply with great impatience...

You wrote that you were disposed to utilize your journey for the organizing of the Left Fraction. Unfortunately there is no mention of this in your letter.

Now as to the general political angle of these facts. The Catalan Federation, according to what I understand, has not and does not seek for a general Spanish organization. If this is so, then it is leading itself and the Catalan labor movement into defeat... Precisely the force of the Left Opposition in Spain could and should consist in raising all these questions to a historic pitch not permitting isolated groups and sects to destroy the Revolution by provincialism, by passive or active nationalism, by bureaucratic myopia, etc. We have lost much time on this field, and time is a very precious factor in the Revolution. A new loss of time would be a crime. On the Spanish Communists and on you personally, dear friend, rests a tremendous historical responsibility. The Catalan Federation is only an arena for influence, but not a sure lover. Without a serious principle basis, without a clear strategic line, the Catalan Federation, ~~engrafted~~ *engrafted* with numerous prejudices, would not itself stand up under the tests of the Revolution and would be defeated at the next sharp turn. A small but firm Marxist nucleus, understanding precisely what it wants, can save not only the Catalan Federation, but also the Spanish Revolution. Only on one condition: these small nucleus must march under its own clear program and under its own banner.

I beg you to reply to me as quickly as you possibly can, precisely on these questions, conceding that in my eyes they have decisive importance.

Note by comrade Trotsky: Nin has never replied to these questions and has never explained on what basis he entered the Central Committee of the Federation.

X X X

May 26, 1931.

You see that <sup>at</sup> the end of my new work on the Spanish Revolution, I attach a considerable number of my letters addressed to you, at the same time eliminating everything which had a personal or "polemical" character, no matter how friendly; I left only the principled and political considerations...

Note by comrade Trotsky: Nin expunged all these letters from the Spanish edition.

May 31, 1931.

Unfortunately I cannot assimilate the reassuring observations you make apropos of the situation in Spain and especially in Catalonia. You find that there is no reason for fearing premature events in Catalonia, even granting that the anarchosyndicalists who possess the hegemony in the labor movement hold on to the workers with all their power. According to you, the Catalan Federation is acting in the same direction. I see in this information, which is in agreement with the information of the bourgeois press on the anarchosyndicalists, not a source of mitigation but on the contrary a source of disquiet. So far as I can judge, the anarchosyndicalists are carrying on a policy of conciliation towards the poor and wretched regime of Colonel Macia, the Barcelonian agent of the Madrid imperialists. The anarchosyndicalist leaders have probably become the underlieutenants and in fact the agents of national civil peace in Catalonia. <sup>direct</sup> As far as I can judge from your letter, the Catalan Federation occupies a conciliatory position between the anarchosyndicalists, that is to say, substitutes for the revolutionary policy of the united front the opportunist policy, defending and <sup>withholding</sup> ~~supporting~~ the anarchosyndicalists and thereby the Macia regime. It is precisely in this that I see one of the sources of fatal explosion which can take on a dangerous character in a certain stage. The task of the trade unions is not to hold back the workers but, on the contrary, to mobilize and organize them for the offensive...

In order that the restraining of premature and unreasonable actions may not be transformed into a Menshevik extinction of the Revolution, we must have a clear strategic line, the advanced workers must clearly understand it in order that they may tirelessly expound it to large masses. The Catalan Federation obviously has no strategic line. Its leaders fear to ponder on the fundamental problems of the Revolution; otherwise they would not have that infantile and stupid fear of "Trotskyism" which expresses the entire extent of their political thought. Solidarity with such leaders instead of opposing to them a serious and tenacious policy, even in the most friendly tone, means heading with open arms towards tragic errors. But on that I have often written and I shall not return to it.

x x x

June 29, 1931.

...To win over the proletarian nucleus of the Catalan Federation, it is necessary to create a firm nucleus of the Left Opposition in Catalonia, and corresponding publications, at the very least, a bulletin in the Catalan language. We must submit Macia to a pitiless and unceasing criticism which events will brilliantly confirm...

The fact that the Stalinists in Barcelona have drawn to their side several dozens of unemployed--as you write--is in my opinion an important symptom which speaks against the Catalan Federation. How can the leading revolutionary organization fail to influence the unemployed who represent the left flank of the movement? I think that the reason for this is the opportunism of the Federation, the absence of activity and vigor on its part, its premature "wisdom", that is, opportunism. During the Revolution, the workers pass quickly from one organization to another...

x x x

July 2nd, 1931

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...My criticism is not the fact that you write little, or seldom, but that in your correspondence you obstinately avoid certain questions...

There was still one moment which disquieted me. You cannot be ignorant of Kasper Rosner's present position... On this question, I have been awaiting more frankness

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on your part. If you consider that I have made committed such or such an error towards Rosmer, I am ready to hear any criticism whatsoever, even the harshest, and I am ready to do everything to mend the situation which has been intensified entirely and exclusively because of Rosmer. But I insist that the fact that you keep me uninformed regarding Rosmer's visit, not informing me of what he wants, proposes, and of what, according to your opinion and your estimation, I should do on this question, disturbs me a good deal. It is in this, in my opinion that there is an element of "diplomacy".

X X X

July 27th, 1931

...I insist that that part of your letter devoted to Rosmer has produced a bizarre impression upon me. You write that we cannot separate political significance from personal significance. That is correct: I insist upon that all the time. Now, it seems to me that not only do you separate political from personal significance, but that you are inclined to subordinate political to personal significance. We have undergone a series of separations on an international scale: We have freed ourselves from Overstraten, who represented a Belgian ~~edition of Maurin~~ edition of Maurin, and whom Rosmer half supported (he does everything by halves); with enormous efforts, we have separated ourselves from the Monattists and semi-Monattists whom Rosmer has obstinately supported; we have carried on a struggle against ~~the syndicalist backsliding~~ (Gourget) who approached us only through Rosmer's fault; for a year Rosmer openly and clearly prevented a polemic with the Bordiguists; finally he supported the Landau clique on whose methods and viewpoints I have written in a sufficiently detailed manner in the circular letter. It seems that all these questions are super-political, very often even programmatic...But you write that you want to see Molinier and Frank to decide on which side you stand. I can in no way comprehend that...

How, as an international organization, could we act in case of new principle divergences in the different sections: Are we going to transport the representatives of the two groups to every capital in the world? Is there some misunderstanding--which is still not clear to me--of a profoundly principled or episodic character?

Perhaps being too occupied with Spanish matters, you do not read the foreign publications of the Opposition, among others, La Verite, the Russian Bulletin, and above all, the International Bulletin? Otherwise, I should have to understand it thus: All the ideological work of the last two years is non-existent for you, in its place should be substituted personal impressions. But that would be impressionism and not Marxism. It is obvious that this cannot be your policy...

X X X

August 26th, 1931

You complain of not receiving a letter from me. However, I have written to you no less often than you have to me. Especially I sent you a long letter concerning Rosmer. Up to the present, I do not know if you have received it. On the other hand, the Berlin comrades complain that you do not reply to anyone's letters...

I see myself obliged to declare in an absolutely formal manner, the following: All these personal "accusations" which Rosmer projects against Molinier were known by us long before the conflict and together with Rosmer, we consider these accusations as slanders and took measures to force the slanders to accept responsibility. Rosmer has stooped to bringing forth these accusations again only after there has arisen a political conflict between him and Molinier...

X X X

September 1st, 1931.

I have received your letter of August 26th. You pose before yourself the problem: whether to summon the workers into the Party or the Federation?...

To judge by the present results of collaboration with the Federation, they are bringing

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us, in my opinion, more harm than benefit. The entire press of the C.I. and above all, Freyda, have made us responsible for Maurin's opportunist confusion. Mill's articles in La Verite have contributed much to this. However, we must break with the Federation by leaving it almost unconditionally. In other words, the experience of collaboration with the Federation has weakened us on a Spanish and international scale, it has contributed almost nothing on the Catalan scale. It is time to ~~re-examine~~ strike a balance. In my opinion, an abrupt political turn is necessary in order that we shall not continue to confuse ourselves with Maurin's advantages and our detriment.

The most correct procedure would be to call for a Communist ~~fraction~~ left fraction, to form its units and to demand their admittance into the Party. That in no way excludes the simultaneous formation of Left units as well in the Federation as in the official Party. But for such a policy, we must have an official center, even the smallest, of the Left Opposition in Catalonia. If you remember, I have insisted upon the above from the first day of your arrival in Barcelona, but alas! I had no success. Even now, I see no other road.

...without a doubt it seems to Rosmer that his opponents are inventing differences. That is explained because Rosmer stops precisely where the question only begins. This man has tremendous personal qualities and a very estimable past. But he has three faults: 1) He is no Marxist. 2) He is no revolutionary. 3) He is not a political man...

My differences with Rosmer began almost on the first day of his return from Frinkipo to Paris. Put back into his own environment, he almost automatically resumed his old relations and habits of thought. Verite, at one fell swoop, obviously adopted a syndicalist deviation. On the subject of MacDonald and his Party Rosmer wrote no otherwise than in this spirit: That they "do not understand" how necessary it is to defend the interests of the working class. If Cuvier determines between animals by the dissecting knife, by these words "do not understand" Rosmer's manner of thinking is determined. He considered that the Party is one thing, and La Verite is another. He feels no need for the International organization. He had the relations with it that one has with a heavy burden. He protected Overstraten, the Bordighists and ever things which is confused and undetermined, thereby seeking a point of support for his own lack of determination. If it were a question of a young comrade, we could doubtless say to ourselves: "He will learn". But unfortunately, the everybody was waiting for Rosmer to teach others, and very especially, everyone was disillusioned. From this arose the conflict of the live and revolutionary comrades with the Rosmer group. Persuading and criticizing Rosmer in personal letters, I have at the same time done everything which rested with me to safeguard not only the unity of the organization but also Rosmer's responsible position within it. However, he arrived at no compromise. He wanted to crush those young comrades who, basically, were right against him....

X X X

September 27th, 1931

...Must the Spanish Left Opposition be a narrow or a broad fraction?...Today, so far as Catalonia is concerned, the question was posed, as I see it in your letter, as follows: Must we summon the workers to enter the official Communist Party or the Catalan Federation?...Can one seriously assert that the Left Opposition even now will still call the workers to enter the Catalan Federation? I cannot understand it. It would be a very grave mistake which would not only weaken the Left Opposition but also dishonor it.

The question regarding the official Party is posed otherwise in principle...I've always thought that many comrades do not appreciate sufficiently the possibilities for development of the official Party in Spain. This is not the only time that I have written the above. To ignore the official Party as an imaginary quantity, to turn our backs upon it, that would appear to me a very great mistake. On the contrary, we must protect the course toward a unification of the ranks with respect to the official Party. Nevertheless, this task is by no means so simple. So long as we remain a weak fraction, this task is generally unaccomplished. To provoke inside the official Party a serious turn in favor of a union we can only accomplish when we become a serious force. The opponents of "broad fraction" reply to that: But if the group around us a large layer of workers, we would be transformed by that very act into a second party. I swear that this argument amounts to nothing. If we reason by that purely formal method, then, in order to avoid the danger of a second party, the Bolshevik-Leninists should

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generally disappear from the earth. That is also what the Stalinists want. Political Malthusianism is most contradictory to the nature of all forms of Malthusianism. Every political current which has confidence in its forces cannot fail to look forward to unifying the largest possible masses around it...

The Left Opposition would become a sect if it arrived at this conclusion that its task is solely criticism of the actions of the official Party and the mass organizations of the proletariat. The Spanish revolution is a fact. There has been a tremendous amount of time lost without that, including therein, time lost by the Spanish Left Opposition. In a year we will not be able to reproduce, following our desires, the revolutionary situation which we are today ignoring. It is precisely in Spain that the Opposition can become, within a short lapse of time, a large force. But the first condition for that is: Not to be afraid of becoming a force, but to look forward to it....

X X X

November 19th, 1931

....You write on the "honorable" suspension of El Soviet as a refusal to submit itself to the formal censure of the governor. I find this manner of posing the question incorrect in principle. A revolutionary organization cannot cease publication in the form of a simple political demonstration. This act is worthy of a democrat but not of a Marxist. A Marxist should make use of the legal possibilities to the very end, complementing them with illegal actions. There is nothing "shameful" in submission to censure. If you have not the force to do away with it; it is a question of the relation of forces, but not of abstract morality. To cease publication without replacing it with an illegal publication simply signifies desertion. In that I see nothing "honorable".

Then how could we have acted? To explain openly and clearly to the workers the existing conditions; The internal support on the part of the workers is insufficient, the support promised by friends does not come—we are obliged temporarily to cease the publication of El Soviet as a weekly—but we are stepping back only the better to leap forward. Workers, help us! There is how, in my opinion, you should have motivated the temporary suspension of the weekly...

X X X

November 28th, 1931.

On the grossest errors in Spanish politics, we confined ourselves in correspondence to mutual persuasion, and we did not unnecessarily transport the discussions onto the international arena, even in the most friendly form. But Willi Mill's entirely false and opportunistic letters from Spain, without any open reply (this I consider a mistake). However, the misunderstanding arising on the basis of the budget has become the object of an international intrigue. I shall not conceal from you that this incident creates an extremely unfavorable impression upon me. I think you should be required to explain your first letter, to take back your accusations, which are absolutely impermissible in form just as much as in basis, and to state whether you intended your letter for international circulation. In this way, we could consider the incident liquidated and the necessity for an international polemic would disappear....

X X X

December 16th, 1931

As it appears (incidentally you write the same thing) you have not read the thesis on the world situation with sufficient care, otherwise your objection is incomprehensible. Everything depends on the manner in which we define "Kerenskyism": As the last bourgeois government after which the bourgeoisie must perish, or as the last left government, the furthest Left which the bourgeoisie can advance in the struggle for its regime, and which can save the bourgeoisie (and ~~is~~ can in no way perish) or yield place to a fascist government. Everything depends upon the relation of forces and above all upon the existence of a solid revolutionary party, which there is not in Spain.

In Spain there is a liberal socialist coalition government. Those about me assert that it

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is the "last" or the "next to the last" left government, that is, that there is still open the possibility of a government further to the left, a "socialist" government, which by no means can infallibly mark the end of the bourgeoisie. Let us recall that in Germany the social-democratic, "~~socialist~~" "Soviet" government (that is, the furthest left there could possibly have been) saved the bourgeoisie. The same thought is further developed in my opinion in relation to the situation in England.

.....The international Opposition manifested towards the Spanish Opposition exceptional attention, if we take into consideration the weakness of our forces. The world crisis struck indirectly but very realistically at all the comrades who have the opportunity of giving financial support. Unemployment grew unbearably severe everywhere in alarming proportions. Among the German Oppositionist comrades, many are completely deprived of means. The entire German Opposition was not half so much the object of the attention which the Spanish Opposition received, although right now in Germany the situation is incomparably more acute than in Spain. Under these conditions to rake up an international scandal because two or three comrades did not give regularly enough due to financial difficulties, when they were thoroughly relied upon to contribute support to the Spanish publication--no, that is impermissible. In this we have a certain spirit which is foreign to us, which is neither revolutionary, nor proletarian, nor communist.

The Spanish comrades made a great number of mistakes, they lost time, they lost months and months. A series of comrades saw these mistakes, observed them with ~~displeasure~~ uneasiness, kept accusing me of excessive indulgence...But to the very end, we manifested with regard to the Spanish comrades much more extreme patience in questions of tremendous political significance. Confronted with the first financial difficulty, the Spanish comrades rake up an international scandal.

The only explanation I can find is this; the Spanish comrades looked for occasions to support Roamer directly. Having no principle basis for this, that is, without risking open defense of a scandalous political position, the Spanish comrades--unfortunately, you are one of these--profited by the first advantageous or disadvantageous opportunity to lend indirect support to Roamer. That is the sole psychological explanation of the Spanish comrades' manner of acting.

x x x

January 17th, 1932

My impression of the role the Spanish Opposition is playing in international affairs remains exceedingly unfavorable...During the three years of my foreign exile a process of selection of the truly revolutionary elements in the Opposition and their separation from the Philistines who are simply deserters took place. In this task the Spanish comrades took no part. They intervened on international questions only in cases where they considered themselves personally affronted, and in these cases, they intervened in such a manner that they aided the deserters from our ranks...

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June 15th, 1932

Your letter of June 7th contained a series of strange misunderstandings: ~~firstly~~

*1) see last*  
1) If several of your letters containing certain political questions to which I have not replied ~~are protected~~, it was necessary simply to pose the questions again/instead of losing time on general considerations on the profit of the correspondence. Now I repeat this proposal: ~~Exonerate~~ rate for me, I beg you, these questions on which you have received no reply from me; I will undertake to reply immediately this time as I have always done in the past.

2) You write that I refuse aid to the Spanish Opposition. I can only reply to this matter by shrugging my shoulders. I send you all my works, letters, circulars, etc., that is, all the documents which I send to all the national sections. None of these sections accuses me of denying support to it. Perhaps you mean that right now I do not concern myself particularly with Spanish problems? That is true, but that is explained by objective political reasons. In the development of the Spanish ~~and~~ Revolution, I see no new problems of a principle nature. During these last months, there have arisen in the U. S. S. R., in Germany, and in the Orient, ever

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new problems of tremendous weight. In dividing my working time, I am guided by political ideas. I sent you all the manuscripts devoted to German matters, at the same time I sent them to Germany. I believe that the German problems affect the Spanish comrades just as deeply as the Spanish problems. I concede that you regard the problem otherwise.

3) Finally you write that I stopped "helping" because <sup>after</sup> we were not of the same opinion on different comrades. Everything has its limits, comrade Min. In this way you think that the question of appreciation of such or such a comrade can obligate me to change my political relations toward a revolutionary organization; and despite that, you insist upon our correspondence, and you assert that it is "very useful". I do not understand this at all.

4) You repeat once more that we have no political differences with you. I would be very happy if the matter had really been like that. But already, before this incident with the French comrades which lost all its significance long ago, I wrote to you that your letters had a purely diplomatic character. You confine yourself to abstractions, to banalities, and you have never replied on concrete political questions. If you leaf through my letters to you (and I have at my house a complete set of copies) then you'll be persuaded without effort that beneath a formal agreement there can be discovered in each case a fundamental disagreement. That is why I think that my aid to the Spanish Opposition would have been better if ~~our~~ on these questions of dispute we had exchanged our opinions not by private letters, which remain without result, as the entire part has convinced me, but by public or semi-public letters, for example, in the Spanish Bulletin, so that the Spanish comrades could take part in the collective elaboration of opinion on all the disputed questions. I think that a whole series of disputed questions, Spanish as much as international, can and must be submitted to a serious principle discussion, without any concealment behind personal sympathies and antipathies, because I think that such a method not only is not proper, but also is impermissible among ~~revolutionary~~ revolutionary circles, especially in Marxist circles.

x x x

September 20th, 1933

Several weeks ago I wrote to you asking you to tell me precisely what questions you had brought forward in the letters you had written to me which I had not received. To this last letter I have received no answer. It was sent ~~special delivery~~, just as the present letter is being sent by ~~special delivery~~...

*Registered.*

*By registered mail.*

x x x

November 14th, 1933

.....From different <sup>sources</sup> ~~sources~~, I afterwards received the information that the Spanish comrades— you personally above all others—estimate the situation in Spain in the sense that the revolution has come to an end. There is no need to say how serious this question is in determining political perspectives. It seems to me absolutely necessary to bring fullest clarity into this problem. It would be most preferable if the new C. C. would clarify its view point on this question in a separate resolution; At one stroke this would put an end to false interpretations. Incidentally, perhaps your C. C. has already pronounced itself on this matter; so much the better...



CONFIDENTIAL  
Strictly Personal

March 7, 1938

Dear Comrade Swabeck:

After a series of discussions with you and the acquaintance with documents I esteem notwithstanding-- totally independent from the evaluation of the attitude of the Minority-- that in the organizational policy of the majority of the central committee there are elements of formal intransigence which may appear as bureaucratism and which in any case will bring the authority of the central committee and its influence, rather injury than advantage.

1. After the June plenum where all the decisions were accepted unanimously, your group attempted to have recourse to a co-optation in order to guarantee for itself a majority in the central committee, though nobody could understand in what the majority is different from the minority.
2. The proposal of the central committee to the New York branch concerning proletarianization was a mistake, not in its general tendency but in its mechanical approach to the issue and the manifestly practical hopelessness of the proposal under the given conditions.
3. In consideration of the fact that the two groups have approximately the same weight it would be, it seems to me, reasonable for the majority to make a concession to the minority and after the designation of comrade Cannon as permanent secretary to draw in also comrade Abern as assistant secretary.
4. It appears to me absolutely impermissible to deprive comrade Abern of his vote on the occasion of the departure of comrade Swabeck.
5. The elaboration of a draft thesis concerning the prospects of American imperialism on the back of the minority represents an ostensibly factional step less justified as in this question no differences appeared up until now. The situation became that much ~~worse~~ worse as the document was destined for discussion with foreign comrades who in that way learned of the draft thesis before the minority members of the central committee of the American League.
6. The proposition of the immediate transfer of the headquarters to Chicago is practically equivalent to a split.
7. The allegation that in spite of the hopes of any "optimists", the situation in the League since the passage from the propaganda to the agitation stage became yet more acute seems to me not convincing. By the passage from one stage into another the malady usually comes to the surface. But the serious successes in the field of mass work will inevitably produce a favorable influence upon the internal relations and in every case provoke a radical regroupment by gradual isolation of the disintegrating elements.

A split now would have an a priori character; understandable to nobody but its initiators and would destroy the authority of the Left Opposition in America for a long time to come. In the meantime from the letters of comrade Cannon it is particularly clear that great perspectives are opening up for the American League.

I permit myself to establish the following axiom: The oppositional minority has a certain right to manifest impatience but the leading majority in no case.

(Signed)  
L.T.

Fraternally yours,  
L.T.

2377

Confidential

March 8, 1933

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

After thorough consideration, and in the light of the discussions we have had, I find myself in complete accord with the criticism you have made of the majority group of the National Committee in your letter to me of March 7. I fully accept these criticisms as correct and wish to add the following complement to a couple of the points cited:

1. On the question of co-optation the majority was guilty despite the political agreement it had obtained at the plenum, of initiating an organizational measure which, regardless of the declaration made by the minority not to struggle against the co-optation, nevertheless, under the circumstances, served to maintain and sharpen the internal conflict.
2. The proposal for proletarianization was initiated by the majority of the national committee because of the social composition of an extremely weak proletarian basis of the New York branch. The proposal was originally accepted unanimously by the National Committee (Shachtman absent, Abern and Glotzer voting in favor with the other members) expressed to be submitted for joint discussion with the executive committee of the branch with the endeavor to have it introduced to the branch by the National Committee and the local executive committee jointly.
3. The proposal for the transfer of the headquarters to Chicago is so far advanced only for discussion. Such transfer in due time has been accepted by all leading comrades as a generally correct orientation. It is to be understood as a proposal to be submitted for general agreement and not to be carried out in the face of definite protests which might arise at this time growing out of the internal conflict.

However, in all of their general and specific implications the criticisms you have made are correct. I accept them in the sense that the majority of the National Committee is the responsible leading group and especially has the task of steering such a course which in no way puts strictures upon the full collaboration of all comrades, which helps to overcome the present internal factional-stalemate and which in every respect facilitates the development of the League.

I accept the criticisms as a guide for the future which I shall endeavor to have adopted in the same spirit by the responsible leading group, but which under all conditions I shall defend and support personally. To this I ~~may~~ add my pledge also to be guided by the axiom established by you so that it may serve at this juncture for the preservation of the unity of the League.

On the other hand it is necessary to establish the fact that the present internal conflict in the League began with our disagreement over the international question. It has increased in sharpness and intensity, not ignoring the part played by the measures taken by the majority which you correctly criticize, but nevertheless becoming more acute as we pressed forward for a decisive turn in our main activities from the propaganda stage to the agitation stage.

2378

2 3 7 3  
UNTERSCHLICH  
=====

4. September 1935

Liebe Genossen, A. Aben und G. Weber,

In Beantwortung Ihres Briefes vom 18. August. Alle Briefe und Dokumente wie die gesamten Materialien des Juniplenums habe ich sehr sorgfältig studiert. Meine Meinung mag falsch sein, aber sie ist keinesfalls durch irgendwelche "einseitige" Information entstanden.

Immer wenn in meinen Briefen von der Leitung (leadership) die Rede ist, meine ich nicht nur Cannon, Shachtman-Svabek, sondern selbstverständlich auch die Gruppe des Genossen Musty. Das Bedürfnis in der Leitung zwischen den zwei wichtigsten Gruppen ist in erster Linie den Protokollen des Juniplenums klar geworden. Das ändert die Situation im negativen Sinne, beeinflusst aber die Einschätzung der Haltung Ihrer Gruppe nicht.

In Ihren früheren Briefen haben Sie der Cannon-Shachtman-Svabekgruppe besonders scharf den Vorwurf gemacht, dass sie der Lustygruppe ungenügend kritisch gegenübersteht, ihre Schwächen viel zu viel toleriert und um der guten Friedens willen für ein halbes Jahr die Diskussion überhaupt auszuschliessen versucht. Jetzt machen Sie Cannon und Shachtman den entgegengesetzten Vorwurf: sie hätten die Lustygruppe nicht genügend beachtet und so gehandelt, als ob sie allein an der Führung wären. Diese Nichtberücksichtigung allein zeigt mir, was für eine schroffe Wendung Sie selber durchgemacht haben in den letzten Wochen, ohne es zu bemerken. Das beweist, dass subjektive Momente, Dominanzen, alte Bindungen zu einem gut Teil für die Politik Ihrer Gruppe bestimmend sind: Schlusssätze und Anklagen ändern sich, die Opposition aber bleibt permanent.

Dass ich den Genossen Lussy und seine Gruppe für einen höchst wichtigen Faktor nicht nur der WPU, sondern auch der internationalen Bewegung halte, brauche ich nicht erst zu sagen. Ich verfolge mit grossem Interesse, alles was er schreibt, denn, wie ich ihm persönlich mitteilte, hoffe ich, dass die gemeinsame Unterzeichnung des Manifests der Vierten eine Kampfverbrüderung sozusagen für das ganze Leben bedeutet.

Ich könnte es nicht für ein Verbrechen ansehen, dass Cannon und Shachtman in der ersten Zeit nach der Verschmelzung die Diskussion vermeiden wollten. Die Diskussion ist nicht das einzige und auch nicht das primäre Element des Parteilebens. Wenn die Diskussion sich nicht von der Aktion sondern von sich selbst nährt, ist die Partei verloren. Man sollte der neuen Partei die Möglichkeit geben, sich an den Massenaktionen zu beteiligen, Erfahrungen zu sammeln, Fehler zu begehen, damit sich die Diskussion auf einer höheren Stufe entwickelt, und befruchtend wirkt. Die Partei blieb, wie Sie unterstreichen, ohne Stellungnahme zur französischen Wendung. Auch das ist kein Unglück an und für sich. Ich habe zum Beispiel seinerzeit den holländischen Genossen den Rat gegeben, sich in Anbetracht der scharfen Meinungsverschiedenheiten in der SFIO-Frage nicht sogleich festzulegen, sondern kritisch abzuwarten, was die Erfahrung zeigen wird. Dass Ihre Gruppe die französische Wendung verteidigt hat, ist natürlich ihr Verdienst. Dass Sie aber auch aus dieser Frage eine Waffe gegen die Leitung zu schärfen suchten, halte ich für einen Fehler. Ich nehme mit Freude zur Kenntnis, dass Sie dazu beigetragen haben, den Genossen Musty für die französische Wendung zu gewinnen. Ich halte aber für unbestreitbar, dass die Erfahrung selbst in dieser Frage entscheidend ist. Daher wäre es falsch, durch eine vorzeitige Diskussion eine Spaltung oder Mahnung der Partei hervorzurufen, anstatt einige Zeit die Ereignisse selbst reden zu lassen.

Was das Verhältnis zur amerikanischen SP anbelangt, so halte ich Ihre Kritik an den Cannon-Shachtman-Thesen für höchst übertrieben. Beim Vergleich der Cannon-Musty-These kann ich nur Nuancen auffindig machen, die aber in rein spekulativer Weise ins Unendliche fortentwickelt werden. Wir sind keine Empiriker, schon recht. Aber wir sind auch keine Transzendentalisten. Man soll sich mehr an die Wirklichkeit halten, Erfahrungen in Bezug auf die SP sammeln, kritisch prüfen und nach längeren Abständen diskutieren. Dass man sich in einer taktisch-praktischen Frage für die Ewigkeit festlegen soll, ist falsch. Man soll doch aus den ausgeklügelten Varianten der möglichen Entwicklung kein Hindernis für den nächsten Schritt machen.

Meine Schlussfolgerungen? Ein Bündnis, direkt oder indirekt, offen oder verdeckt, der Musty- und der Obergruppe mit der Oehlergruppe gegen Cannon-Shachtman wäre ein Verbrechen gegen die Partei und gegen die Vierte Internationale. Das nächste Plenum und die Diskussion müssen ihren Weg nach dem Bündnis Cannon-Musty-Weber gegen die Oehlergruppe bedeuten. Nur in diesem Falle wird die Diskussion einen prinzipiellen Charakter haben, die Oehlergruppe zusammen schrumpfen, und ihre hartnäckigsten Elemente sich zehnmal überlegen, ehe sie sich abspalten, um ins Nichts zu versinken.

Möglich, dass Cannon und andere Genossen zu rasch, zu scharf, zu "bürokratisch", wie Sie sagen, vorgehen wollten gegenüber der Oehlergruppe. Die Lage ist aber heute ganz anders. Die Diskussion ist in vollem Gange. Die Parteidemokratie kann sich nicht mehr beklagen. Das heisst es nicht von den "bürokratischen" Lehren von gestern zu sprechen, sondern in der Diskussion eine richtige und klare

2379

INTERNATIONAL  
CONFEDERATION OF WORKING MEN

Dear Sirs

Stellung einnehmen, die national wie international von allen verstanden werden kann.

Liebe Freunde, nehmen Sie mir diesen Brief nicht übel. "Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders".

Mit besten Wünschen für Sie, Herr

durch Herrn Kolbe

Joh. L. ...

In der Hoffnung, dass Sie die der Cannon-Sprechern-Veranstaltung  
besondere Beachtung schenken werden, bitte ich Sie, die  
Ergebnisse der Arbeit der Internationalen Arbeiter-  
Konferenz in London, die am 1. August 1900 stattfand,  
zu lesen. Die Ergebnisse sind in dem Bericht  
"Die Internationale Arbeiter-Konferenz in London"  
enthalten, der in der Zeitschrift "Der Arbeiter"  
abgedruckt ist.

New York City  
August 18, 1935.

2381

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

In your letter of August 4th to us you express the conviction that the slogan of "organic unity" which appears to you to be our most important difference with the "leadership", is not a sufficient platform to justify the existence of an independent faction. You further intimate the fear that our course may lead us to shield the Oehler group, whose attitude to the splendid activity of the French Bolshevik-Leninists is plainly anti-revolutionary. In reply, we wish to establish our real position as succinctly as possible.

The impression abroad that we have sought to use the "organic unity" slogan as a factional platform is, to say the least, unfortunate and does not correspond with the facts. From the very outset our grouping has consistently defended the revolutionary policy implicit in the French Turn. The question of "organic unity" need never have attained the prominence it achieved at the pre-fusion CLA Conference if Cannon-Shachtman had been willing to shelve factional considerations and have accepted our offer of a common formulation. Then, as now in all essentials we agreed with the position taken in the Letter to Graipeau and in the programmatic article Whither France. At the same time we think it necessary to state that your exposition on organic unity served to clarify some of our formulations arrived at independently by us in the first days (mainly that the slogan of organic unity was not ours). We realized that in itself "organic unity" solved nothing, that to mean anything in our sense it would have to be filled with revolutionary content. We took exception only to the blanket statement of Cannon and Shachtman that "organic unity as such" was reactionary, leaving no room for the possibility that if it should "facilitate the re-groupment and re-organization of the genuinely revolutionary elements now scattered throughout the two parties, it would in the present circumstances be a step forward". Nor has this slogan played any but the most incidental part in our policy since. If you would judge for yourself, may we refer you to the Supplementary Statement introduced to the Resolution on International Relations at the June Plenum by Satir, Weber and Glotzer (See Enclosure 1). In the course of nine substantial paragraphs setting out for the first time at any official deliberation of the Workers' Party of the US the significance of the French Turn the matter of organic unity received about half a dozen lines.

What separated us from the "leadership", (if by this you mean Cannon-Shachtman), was not the matter of "organic unity" but the question of how to consolidate the WPUS into the Fourth International. With Oehler charging that the ICL had capitulated to the social democracy and that Cannon-Shachtman were preparing the party for entry into the American SP., the "French Turn" became a first rate "domestic" issue, and issue which the "leadership" could only afford to ignore with fatal results. It was on this issue that the Oehler faction waxed until it became a menace. It must be remembered that the decisions of the CLA were not binding on the newly formed WPUS which had and still has no official position on the policy of the French Turn. There has been no discussion of its significance in the new party, except for the underground discussion carried on by the Oehler group. And when you counterpose the "leadership" to the Oehler group, it must be further remembered that Cannon-Shachtman are not the exclusive "leadership" but that A. J. Muste and his former AWP associates McKinstry, Selander, Johnson, are also part and parcel of the Party leadership until the next convention. These elements represent the fusion and one of the grave mistakes that Cannon-Shachtman have made is increasingly to carry on as if Comrade Muste and his friends were non-existent and the WPUS merely an extension of the former CLA and more particularly of the Cannon caucus of the CLA. The leadership as it is actually constituted, it is perfectly clear, had no concerted policy in regard to the Oehler group. Instead of educating the party by ideological methods and welding the leadership firmly about an understanding of the International question, Cannon-Shachtman proceeded as if there had never been any fusion attempting to settle accounts with Oehler by purely organizational-disciplinary means.

But all that happened was to add fuel to the flames of Oehler's agitation and numbers and to create sympathy for this sectarian group in the ranks of the former AWP.



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Comrade Muste and his associates on the leading committee were alienated. Our fears concerning the effects on the very existence of the party of the no-discussion policy pursued by Cannon-Shachtman were completely verified at the June Plenum. In this connection we refer you to the documents submitted by the various groups to the June plenum, in particular, by comrade Muste and ourselves. Organizational measures in these circumstances would have split the WPUS, without the American workers understanding in the least the basis of the split in terms of political issues.

On our part we have been and are as intransigently opposed to the sectarian views and factional methods of the Oehler-Bauer group as Cannon-Shachtman ever professed. What may appear like a "conciliatory" attitude has in reality been our insistence on the political liquidation of Oehlerism in the new Party, not by a preventative split but by the immeasurably superior method of ideological clarification. It must be remembered that Comrade Muste in the AWP, prior to the fusion had already adopted a negative attitude with regard to the tactic of the French Turn. However, it became clear to Comrade Muste that the Oehler group were sectarian. In the course of a series of thoughtful discussions between us, Comrade Muste at this time accepted the essential correctness of the ICL policy in relation to the French S.P. This development, in our opinion, represents one of most important stages in the history of the fusion. Why is it that Cannon-Shachtman who for a whole period had far closer personal contacts with Muste than we, utterly failed where we succeeded? The answer lies in their wholly false and bureaucratic approach. Comrade Muste and his group who for the first six months of the Party's existence had collaborated closely with the group of Cannon-Shachtman arrived at the June plenum with a viewpoint on the methods and significance of the internal regime of Cannon-Shachtman identical without own situation. And now with Comrade Muste solid with us on the "French Question" and its exact scope (you will shortly receive a copy of the Memorandum we are jointly drafting) the trend to Oehlerism has stopped. The Oehler group is being systematically isolated. In the ensuing discussion supported as it will be by the march of events, the Oehlerites will be decimated, their better elements saved for the Party (Oehler has made inroad into the youth) and the incorrigibles will have to take the organizational consequences. We submit that these developments that have already taken place and which have preserved the unity of the party have by and large borne out our judgment.

We are prepared to cooperate with all the Marxist elements in the party and have every reason to stand for its collective leadership. We are utterly opposed to Oehlerism but the Cannonite method of the Big Stick alone is not enough. We must be prepared to give Bolshevik answer to the specious arguments of sectarianism. Oehler could never have grown to his present proportions if his charge that support of the ICL policy in France would lead to W.P. entry into the American SP had received a clear and timely refutation. Instead of which Cannon-Shachtman contributed ambiguities on the issue in their resolution on the SP even as late as the June Plenum. It is impossible to build a party, preparing it for mass struggles, when the membership have cause to fear that the independence of the party is in doubt. These doubts were created by the entire political course of Cannon-Shachtman in relation to the SP. The censure of the Spartacus Youth League for a leaflet calling on YPSL (young socialists) to join, the failure to utilize the New Militant for a consistent revolutionary criticism of the SP and its various currents, the "accommodationism" in relation to United Front actions, the attitude that our road to the masses lay through the SP mainly, that talks of the possibility of "reform" of the SP - these created the doubts. We refer you to the Cannon-Shachtman Resolution at the June Plenum on the SP, with its stress on the idea that the WP is merely the "nucleus" of a revolutionary party, and its policy towards those advocating "reform" of the S.P.

We repeat, on the basis of a clear line on the International and SP questions it should be possible to arrive at collective work and leadership. We are ready at all times. But what the attitude of Cannon-Shachtman will be is problematical. It has happened more than once in the past that Cannon has demanded factual predominance and monopoly in leadership even though there was no justification for this in terms of political differences. We intend to help establish a clear Marxist majority. The convention will be the test ~~of~~ of all.

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LDT. 9/18/35

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Trusting that this communication will have thrown a little more light on our aims and activity, and in the hope that we shall continue to have the benefit of your invaluable advice.

With our warmest communist greetings,

Martin Abern

Jack Weber

2383

CONVERSATION BETWEEN S. AND T. ON AMERICAN QUESTION.

End of February, 1936 Oslo, Norway

S - I think we can finish today, we can summarize. When we return we want to be able to report clearly the grounds on which you favor the entry. You appear to put it on two grounds, (1) the present situation in the party is hopeless, (2) you conceive that positive gains will accrue from entry.

T - To say hopeless is a little exaggerated. In the immediate future I don't see important possibilities for the independent organization and in that situation the inner crisis can become fatal. On the other hand, I see no other possibility (for activity or development) which can be compromised if you enter. And even if the positive results of entrance will be modest, (I think they will be important) even then the great advantage will be that the experience will have been accomplished: and all can look forward for a new read... The entry, too, will have advantages for yourself. The ~~same~~ illusions (of work in the S.P. - S), if they are that, will be smashed.

The centrists are measured by fighting not by theses. Our experience will at the same time be a very vital experience for the socialists. It will be fatal for the centrists.. Your road will be different after that, but on a higher level. Discussion will then be not on the miserable S.P., but on the objective situation rather than the subjective... All the good things we have done in mass action will and must continue, pursued as before. If this is impossible, it is clear that the entrance would be prejudicial... Both sides say in their reports that it is possible to continue work in the S.P.

S - It goes without saying that in the event of entry, we put forward our maximum demands regarding the right of our press, the New Militant, etc., etc. But if we can't secure these concessions, do you still believe in entry?

T - In the beginning the juridical conditions are important only so far as they reflect objective conditions. If the latter are favorable, the juridical conditions play a secondary role. To insist in the negotiations on juridical conditions might be unwise. One can't show all his cards to the adversary. After all, it is possible to so elaborate the juridical conditions as to make entrance impossible. The position of Norman Thomas must be thought of.... We must not give the S.P. rank and file (Old Guard, right centrists, etc. - S) arguments against him (opposing our entry - S). I am sure if you decide to enter you will find objective conditions which will permit you, with your strength and unity, to develop your work in a growing spiral.

S - This matter has a bearing on the Canadian situation, which I am not charged to discuss officially.....  
The other day I indicated that the W.P. was not condemned to be merely a propaganda group. We can hope to repeat the successes in Minneapolis and Toledo.

T - What recruits have you had as a result of your successes?

S - In Minneapolis perhaps fifty recruits... We also had some in California as a result of Sacramento. I don't know about Toledo... But do you not think that these experiences indicate that the W.P. can function as an independent organization...

T - I believe that the workers followed our comrades not because they were members of the W.P. You can only personally, by small groups, win recruits personally for the party. The loss of the name W.P. (the firm-name) will not be decisive. I believe even that the cover of the Socialist name will be more winning because it is more known. Our duty in the S.P. will be not discussion with centrists, but mass work, teaching the youth to do it.... I cannot say that the independent participation cannot lead to the growth of the independent revolutionary party, but this way (entry) is the shortest way.

The past of America is full of strikes and heroic leadership, but without political crystallization. There is a change in the objective situation now. It must produce a change in the minds of the workers. Maybe it is a change for six months or for six years - we cannot know that.

S - What perspective do you see in our possible entry - long or short range?

T - Rather short - because the Militants without the Old Guard and with ~~their~~ their inconsistent leadership, between pressure from you on the one hand and Stalinists on the other, cannot last for long. Part (of their following) will go to you and part to the Stalinists. Yes, it will be rather short. Of course, depending on the objective situation, on strikes, etc.

S - What do you think of the thesis of the possible reform of the S.P. or of the probability?

T - It is improbable that the reform of the S.P. will be possible. We have not two policies, (a) reform of the S.P., (b) to split it. No, our policy is the same in both cases. It is to search for the youth, to create groups, personal relations, lead to mass action, compromise the centrists in the process by pointing out that it is the centrists who oppose such mass action. We must compromise, in the course of practical action, a certain part (the centrist) of the party in the eyes of the other.... A split is inevitable. The initiative will probably be taken by the apparatus. It is very important for us to grasp just that moment when the apparatus realizes that moment because adaptation to the apparatus at that time is very dangerous (cites Molinier, Belgian situation, etc.)

S - The Oshlerites and the Baucrites claimed that the French Turn was not specifically limited to the French situation. They claimed that the I.C.L. had in view an extension of the turn to all countries, i.e., entry

into the Socialist Parties. And apparently that is the way things are working out.

T - But that has been forced on us by the objective situation. Originally the French Turn was suggested by me. If the experience in France would have been negative we would have learned something. But the experience was positive. And the other way, of ~~an~~ independence, in other countries did not give positive results, in any country. It (the extension of the entry) was also caused by conjunctural factors.

S - In view of what you said about the Comintern assuming the functions of the Social Democracy, should we be in favor of the unity of the Second and Third Internationals?

T - Unity will be managed by the two bureaucracies. Unity is a good thing. We fight on the question of the manner and content of unity. We cannot fight unity itself. If we could enter the C.P., we should do so, of course, but it is impossible. In the unity negotiations, the first request of the Stalinists will be the exclusion of the Bolshevik-Leninists. (Cites French experience - Stalinists demanded exclusion of B-L's as condition of unity - Now, the B-L's out, Stalinists stalling on unity.)

S - In the old days the KAPD predicted liquidation of the Comintern visualizing it as some formal and dramatic act. Actually, there has occurred a liquidation of principles, a filling up of the old forms with neo-social-democratic content. Does the Comintern really require unity with the Social-Democracy?

T - They drag out the affair because they have on very important questions trump cards in their hands. They will more or less destroy the S.P. Fusion is, however, not excluded.

S - Do you conceive a left zig-zag on the part of the Comintern to be possible?

T - that is not excluded. Naturally, such a zig-zag would be very important from the point of view of our possibilities, because the C.P. contains many different strata of people, unemployed, declassed intellectuals, functionaries, petty-bourgeois, etc. Many of these think the Peoples Front is a good thing and the C.P. - the best part of it. Many workers think the Peoples Front is a manoeuvre. There is a difference between what the C.P. sometimes says at its own meetings and what it says in public and thereby it accumulates contradictions, social and political.

There can be an episodic turn to the left but for many people such a turn would be a disintegration. For the workers it would appear as a manoeuvre perhaps, but for the others it would be a disintegration. A turn to the left would be catastrophic to the petty bourgeois, philistines and opportunists in the C.P.



S - Do you think a re-alignment in the relations of the powers would lead to a change in U.S.S.R. foreign policy, a return to Lenin's formula of revolutionary defeatism, on the part of the Comintern?

I - Certainly, if the U.S.S.R. were attacked by Japan, Germany, etc. they would threaten, the Bureaucracy would threaten the world with social revolution... Even the diplomacy of the Entente and Wilson and (the Germans) aimed to create revolutionary situations in the enemy countries. But ( the bureaucracy is no longer Bolshevik) ..... inequality becomes itself the most privileged stratum. It becomes a new social stratum in itself, defending itself against the proletariat with all its power. It is interesting to note that this did not take place during the early lean years. Then there was not fat of privilege to be had. Now that the country has become more or less prosperous, acquired a stock to satisfy not all, but many of its needs, the inequality which arises becomes a very important political fact. I am sure that if this process continues, not smashed by a war or counter-revolution, there will be another political revolution. (Cites struggles of bourgeoisie among itself in France after French Revolution.)

Marx and Engels could not foresee this eventuality because of the complications (of the concrete process of the proletarian revolution -S). We can be sure that the Russian proletariat will accomplish the social revolution by a new political revolution when the conditions become more favorable. The new numbers of the Bolshevik-Leninists in Russia are a prelude to that development. (see below.)

The change in army ranks, the new military titles, is of great significance. Stalin is marshal of the marshals. His political base is not the party but the new nobility, the new orders. These new orders express great privileges in pay, lodging, education, automobiles, special rooms in public libraries even ("Znat", from the word "to know" is the symbol of the nobility, a man known by the country.) This symbol is now re-established for the new nobility. The new nobility rests on the contradictions between the forms of socialist property, socialist productions, and the bourgeois norms of distribution.

(S. here recalls that the Stalinists claim these inequalities are not subject to the above interpretation so long as the means of production remain in the hands of the Soviet State - there being no basis in the private ownership of land, etc. to establish a new ruling class.)

I - It is a bourgeois regime as regards distribution. The Soviet bureaucracy lives the same life as Morgan. The question now is whether the social basis which remains from the October Revolution will overthrow the superstructure or whether the superstructure will alter the social basis. The basis can overthrow the bureaucracy only by a political revolution. It will require more than police measures. Two years ago, the latter would have been enough. But these two years witnessed the stabilization of privileges in the ruling strata, especially,

in the army and police. It is stupid that this is not a social fact of the greatest social and political importance. The contradictions can become so acute that the bureaucracy, in order to protect itself may have to revert to property relations (private -S). It may have to strike at the roots of the present social system.

S - Besides the Bolshevik-Leninists, are there not mensheviks in Stalin's jails? Should we not also call for their release?

I - At the present time in the U.S.S.R. there is absolutely no mention of mensheviks. The press attacks only five categories: White guards, fakers, spies, Trotskyists and Zinovievists. But never mensheviks. Occasionally it mentions Right Oppositionists, meaning those opposed to the Stakhanovite movement for technical and other reasons. But mensheviks are totally discredited in the minds of the people. There are only forty or fifty old men of their number left - the great bulk of their number are supporters of Stalin. All the Opposition goes under our flag - or that of the White Guard.

The bureaucrats are afraid of this fact. They sometimes refuse to recognize it. Then suddenly an astonishing articles calling the attention of the people to it comes from the Pravda. In Leningrad 9,900 were expelled as oppositionists. No less than 200,00, ten per cent, have been expelled recently from the party; and this does not include all. The minimum expelled is seven per cent; the maximum is sixteen per cent, in Siberia, thirteen per cent (and 7-8000 Zinovievists to be found only in Leningrad, all others Trotskyists.) The writer in Pravda says one third of those expelled in Siberia are former White Guards and Kulaks. The remainder are divided into four categories of which the first is Trotskyists. Which means that at least one thousand are Trotskyists. In Karkov, 2,300 expelled. More than 5 per cent for Trotskyism. If we apply even this figure of five percent to the whole 200,000, there must be more than 10,000 Trotskyists. (The purge referred to dates from the summer of 1935 to the present, the report of the Commission in charge is not published.)

.....

I - Ah-ha. A private letter from Cannon a short time ago was bad. But now it must be good because your trip is good, and if the letter is good, my telegram is good. But perhaps I should receive no delegations and receive no telegrams.

It was the aim of my telegram to overthrow a nearly equal balance in the Party to the side of Cannon. It is the only solution of the crisis in the Party.

S - Your telegram has apparently influenced Weber toward submission to the possible majority on the question of independence.

I - And that signifies that the others are against submission?

S - Yes, that is correct. Cannon has opened an attack, a vicious attack on us, on my trip. The Convention will be like an old GLA convention.

T - I shall be glad to write a letter on the subject of your trip, if you will take dictation.

(Dictated letter to S. declaring our delegation never presumed to speak in name of whole party, but loyally presented standpoint of M-W group. Views of T, on one hand and S-W on other remains same as before. Suggested sending cablegram on this if considered useful.)

End of session - Conversation resumed after supper.

.....

S - How do you conceive the main stages in the development of the Fourth International?

T - The movement for the Fourth International is growing stronger. In Belgium it is possible to have an important party. It will adhere to the Fourth International. The French Youth will adhere; everybody will know that an important fraction of the S.P. is for the Fourth. Nothing has changed. As I wrote to Muste and Cannon at the time of the Open Letter, I looked on it (the collaboration with Muste) as a life-long alliance. I do not know at what stage the Fourth will arrive. Nobody knows. It is possible that we will have to enter again into a unified International with the Second and Third. It is impossible to consider the fate of the Fourth International apart from the fate of the national sections and vice versa. Maybe the American section will have to make only formal restrictions in its adherence to the Fourth. Capitalist legality begins first with illegality to bourgeois democracy and the Stalinists and social-democrats are now the representatives of bourgeois democracy. All their attacks are directed against us. In this case, we must foresee situations without precedent in history.

At the Second Congress, Lenin was for the independence of revolutionary parties. That party, created under the hand of Lenin, has become the greatest barrier to the new revolutionary movement. It is a new situation now.... We discussed in our own midst the necessities of proper action... We are convinced of the necessity of an independent party. But how to build it? Public opinion, starting with Roosevelt and ending with Browder, is against us. In the next period the pressure of that opinion will be heavy. When we climb up a cliff we must search for crevices, for footholds. That little foothold now is the S.P. To-morrow we will see.

If we consider the Fourth International only as an International "firm" which compels us to remain independent propagandist societies under any conditions, we are lost. No, the Fourth International is a program,

a strategy, an international nucleus of direction. Its value must consist ~~not~~ in a not too juridical attitude. It is not the immediate fact that our best comrades must go under the yoke of the centrists.. it is disagreeable. We must aim far. We must be patient, Wiry, like Muste (f. smiles good-humouredly).

E - We have already ~~we~~ spoken about the possibility that if our group at the convention found the relation of forces such that we could not continue independently, then in order that the entry be as concerted and effective as possible it would be necessary to have recognition of the rights of the minority.

I - It is my conviction that such an understanding is absolutely necessary and I will write to that effect to Cannon-Schachtman and their caucus.

I believe now that you will have about a third of the convention. In that third you will have a part absolutely against the split. The worst thing in such a situation are illusions. The individual fluctuations toward Cannon or to the direction and discipline of the majority are symptomatic of an important current. There are not four, there is only one perspective. You will have a third for the idea of a split. Concretely you will have possibly only the Cohenites. If your policy is oriented now towards split, you will worsen your situation. If you say you will fight to the end, and then say, "Good, you have the majority, your policy is false. But we must go through the experience; we will accompany you in it. But the question is so important that we want the means to defend our point of view in our united caucus within the S.P. We want this right, not as the vanquished, but as party members, equals -." I believe it will be in the interests of the party as a whole. The situation from the point of view of discipline will change in the new milieu. The discipline can be supported in the new conditions only with the necessary moral authority of the Central Committee. It is not sufficient to depend on the formal arithmetic of numbers. The constitution, the guiding organs of the whole group must be so studied as to give the necessary assurance to the majority of the party that it, the central organ, will be guided only by the unanimous wish for the good of the party. It is a matter now for the victors not to abuse the victory.

CONFIDENTIAL

Translation

H. 9th March 1936

Dear Comrade Cannon:

I have not yet received the decisions of the last Conference, but I hope that everything went well. At any rate, I have received a telegram from Comrades Muste, Spector, and Abern in which they promise their loyal support of the adopted resolution.

Now it is most important (if the entrance into the S.P. materializes) to carry out immediately our work on a sound and effective basis.

You are not confronted today in America with such burning questions as they exist in France. To a certain degree, the exposure of the Centrist leaders will prove more difficult, for the object will not be to use arguments which are of importance only to our own supporters but which have no effect whatsoever on the socialist rank and file. Incidentally, even in France too much energy has been wasted on often purely phraseological "exposures" of the leadership, and too little energy on the thoroughgoing work amongst the membership, especially the youth. In my opinion this mistake should be obviated in America.

An essential part of our work consists of winning the young, thinking elements, which may still be developed, to support our program, our past and therefore also our future. This can be achieved only by well-organized propaganda. Our comrades could perhaps establish a syllabus of lectures for the youth but also for the adults: dealing with the October Revolution, the S.U., Germany, and Austria; the Spanish Revolution, the program of the Comintern, etc., etc. This "quiet" work would have the result of demonstrating to the best socialist elements the huge superiority of our cadres, and at the same time making them more sympathetic and attentive to our open, present-day criticisms.

Naturally, I am not counter-posing this propaganda task to the task of working in the masses. Quite the contrary; the local organizations of the S.P. must above all be drawn into the local struggles, and our most essential task is to create thereby within their ranks a differentiation. However, deepgoing propaganda must create for us in every socialist organizations contacts of sympathetic elements and thus make possible their linking up in mass action. Otherwise, in the event of a break with the centrist elements only those will be with us who have more or less understood theoretically the content of our struggle.

As far as criticism of the Centrist leadership is concerned, it is essential to see to it that this criticism should not lose itself in mere details, which would only antagonize the Socialist following. This criticism must be concentrated on very carefully selected and important issues. There exists a certain danger that our comrades will at meetings react with jeers and contempt to the superficialities and common-places of the Centrists. This may create from the start an atmosphere which is unfavourable to us. The ordinary rank and file member, who has not yet had the necessary political education, will find it difficult to follow us to the higher plane of our criticism, and for this reason sarcasm or irony (even when well deserved) will have on the rank and file a confusing, suspicion creating and provoking effect. This only delivers into the hands of the Centrists a weapon which to utilize against us these emotions. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to have the greatest amount of patience and to argue quietly and in a friendly tone. Certainly this tone may and should change, as soon as the necessary contacts have been made and then important political issues are placed on the order of the day.

All this is not very easy, and it is impossible roll this off as from a music score. However, thanks to our having good cadres with serious experiences, one should, I believe, credit them with being able to adopt a definite method of work.

These considerations are, of course, much too abstract, and probably three fourths of them are superfluous, for you can see there on the spot all matters in their proximity and in a much more realistic manner than we can from here). I only wished to convey to you, for all events, these suggestions, which originate from experiences made in France and partly also in Belgium.

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Information regarding the events in America will be of great importance to our International. It goes without saying that the despatch of official reports would be ~~highly~~ highly dangerous. But a young comrade, say f.i. Cd. Roberts, ~~could~~ could send in private letters the necessary information (impressions, plans, etc.), without thereby committing the leadership of our fraction. But it is very important that we here should be kept informed of your new experiences and the course of events.

x) This is the reason why I make this suggestions in the form of a private letter only; they seem to me to be totally insufficient for a letter to the leadership. Incidentally, I have talk'd about them roughly with Comrades Spector and Faine.

L.T.

~~Return~~ Confidential

H., July 11, 1936

To the Political Bureau

Dear Comrades:

1. The objections of some of the comrades that in my last letter I attempted to "cast off my responsibility" can only make me rejoice. They prove that the rank and file is at last beginning to pre-occupy itself with the surveillance of the leadership. This is a necessary condition for the coherence of the organization. However, have I earned these reproaches? Honestly, I am not sure. The International Plenum with my participation announced the expulsion of R.M. from our organization. The commission created by the I.S. under my chairmanship publicly declared that "La Commune" and its organization had placed themselves outside of the Fourth International. After the fusion with the P.C.I., the I.S. declared that it upholds its decision regarding R.M. under the international conference. Under these conditions, R.M., after failing in his indecisive, unbelievable attempt to foist upon our organization the name of his paper and his "party", nevertheless does leave his stamp upon your paper; that is, proves once more that he is making a joke of the formal ~~decisions~~ ~~decisions~~ decisions, the obligations undertaken to and the public opinion of our international organization, as previously of the national section. I collaborated on your paper. But I am also a member of the International Plenum. I believe that under these very specific circumstances it is not only my right, but my duty as well, to "cast off my responsibility". International discipline is superior in every case to national discipline. If I have carried it out in a form that might, perhaps, offend the democratic sentiments of the organization I am the first to sincerely regret it, but I hope that this explanation will straighten out the misunderstanding. If you find it of use to yourselves, you are at liberty to publish this explanation in your internal bulletin.

2. I do not believe that Molinier's "business affairs" should be on the order of business of your organization. Whether he discontinues or continues his business is not, to my mind, of great importance. He has made so many worthless promises and assumed so many worthless obligations that one more or less cannot weight very heavily in the balance. What is necessary is to proclaim the entire incompatibility between his conceptions (the real ones), his methods of acting, his attitude toward the organization as a whole as well as towards individual comrades (and our own?); it is all of that which makes of him a destructive factor in the organization. In the Plenum I was the last to defend, not only his methods, which are indefensible, but the necessity of a final attempt of collaboration. Now, the experience of the "Commune" and R.M.'s attitude after the most lamentable fiasco of this treacherous adventure, prove in their very essence that there is nothing in common between R.M. on the one hand and our principles, policy, methods and rules of revolutionary morale on the other hand--nothing in common, I repeat. The very fact that the whole organization is ~~nicht~~ obliged at every instant to preoccupy itself with R.M. and not with questions infinitely more important shows the incompatibility of R.M. with the revolutionary organization.

No, it is not a matter of the "business" in itself. It is a question, above all, of the policy of "political pressure" in his own organization. The fact has been established beyond all dispute. The control commission has formally confirmed it. If the International Secretariat, including the undersigned, consented to the subordination of the R.M. question to the interests of the fusion, it was precisely for the purpose of giving the rank and file, especially the youth, an opportunity to go through a experience of their own with R.M. It seems to me that this experience has been fully consummated. It is necessary to draw a definitive balance. That is my opinion.

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3. As to the political resolution, it will be, to say the least, deficient if it permits a group of comrades to vote for it who only the day before expressed themselves in a contrary sense with particular vehemence, not to say brutality. This is new proof that principles mean nothing for R.M. and his group when they are concerned with personal difficulties. They vote for everything, make soft-soaping speeches and prepare some new plot. A fictitious unanimity achieves nothing in such cases and even prevents the organization from educating itself. It is something like a repetition of the mistakes in the experience before the plot of the "Commune".
4. When I read L'Huma and the Popu I repeat to myself: it is impossible for our French section not to have striking successes. The report of your discussions on the Lille case made by Fr. shows quite a high level. Under the pressure of great events one learns quickly. What is needed now is a firm nucleus in the leadership capable of making decisions, of giving commands, and of placing the "freelancers", the adventurers and the factionalists in a position where they can do no harm.
5. T. has sent you his third article. It is written in a very "objective" tone and is very much restrained in its form. This tone corresponds, it seems to me, to the present transitory period between two different stages. It is necessary to explain. Everybody in your ranks must begin to reflect. By the seriousness of our analysis we will win over the best people.
6. I have heard on the radio about Salengro's "build-up" of preparatory measures against the strikers (conference of the prefects, etc.). Conflicts are inevitable. It is the duty of the revolutionists to orient these conflicts towards a political, not a physical denouement, that is, to as little a physical one as possible. To be able to find every time the line between spinelessness and anarchic adventurism is not an easy task. Moreover your influence over the masses is still considerably limited. But the worst accidents provoked by the authorities can serve the revolutionary development on condition that the vanguard knows how, with the aid of the workers involved, to throw the responsibility on the shoulders of the class enemy, and at the same time to explain the political lessons deriving from it. The confectionery workers of Lille could, for example, address a manifesto to the workers of France, explaining that the conduct of the factories by the workers themselves is entirely possible of realization provided that the banks and the key-industries are in the hands of the people. Some corresponding quotations from the socialist and communist programs could then be given and a conclusion drawn up in the sense of the workers' and peasants' government. If the bourgeois radicals oppose it, then it is necessary to base oneself on the support of the real people, the 4-5 million trade unionists, etc. The manifesto need not necessarily criticize the government. It should make some positive proposals to the government in the name of one factory going through a great experience. Such a manifesto could have tremendous repercussions. It will be quoted, criticized, etc. in the entire labor and bourgeois press. If they give in to physical force at the last moment, that is, if the workers allow themselves to be evacuated one by one without entering naturally into a battle with the authorities, the manifesto of the factory still retains all its importance for the future.
- I also believe that in such a case the factory (or group of factories) engaged in a struggle which is for the instant without any way out, could send delegates to plead its cause before the unions, the workers' parties and naturally also before your own.
7. The TEPs disappeared in their time almost without leaving any trace because the leadership was a technical and not a political leadership. They believed that by "action" alone they would win over the workers. But the workers like

everyone else wants to understand what he is acting for. The political factor dominates and determines the physical struggle. This is not at all a matter of preaching spinelessness or of seeking to cover up personal cowardice with some learned exegesis. It is rather, the necessity of understanding the laws that determine the evolution of the masses. It is necessary to accelerate this evolution with political arguments, not to counter-act it with some inept feats of courage. (At the same time it must not for one moment be forgotten that in this period there will indeed be a great need also of courage.)

8. It seems to me that you do not engage in special and systematic action in your penetration of the communist circles. I have read again yesterday, after a considerable lapse of time, "Le Faire", (July 1936). They state that great discontentment persists inside the C.P. "Le Faire" is absolutely incapable of utilizing it, of orienting it because this purely academic enterprise has no firm orientation of its own. A special department is necessary for the penetration of the communist ranks. An explosion is inevitable, but if you are not prepared for it in advance, you will not be able--any more than at S. Denis--to profit from it. Isn't it possible to create a special bulletin for information and rumors concerning the life of the communist party?

9. To explain, to educate, to prepare the sentiment, to furnish the correct slogans: a paper even of a small format can suffice for this need, if one learns to say that which is strictly necessary. Imagine yourselves in a situation in which you have already been driven off from the legal arena. Your illegal paper would of necessity have to be of very small format. But it could at the same time lay a very great role, provided it assured the coherence of the organization by means of slogans corresponding to the situation.

10. It is necessary also to avoid another danger, that is, the attempt to impose our own calendar upon events. Toulon and Brest as well as the June strike are improvisations of the working class against all the official organizations, unannounced even insofar as your own organization is concerned. What will this magnificent proletariat, so resourceful, so imaginative, so full of verve and of reminiscences, improvise next? It is necessary to have confidence in it. That is why it is necessary to pursue with the closest attentiveness, every move, every symptom, even every false rumor that passes through the working class. It is necessary to organize an information service: paper clippings, letters, reports, personal echoes, etc. It is necessary for someone to make it his permanent business to classify documents, to study them, to trace the curve of the movement, etc. This is also the only means of "building-up" the different departments of "General Headquarters".

You will perhaps say to me that it is much easier to give general advice than to orient oneself practically from day to day. To be sure, dear comrades, I will be the last to deny that. Mistakes are inevitable. Not to lose one's head nor one's courage even in the midst of worst misfortunes--that is the last bit of advice that I can give you in this letter, which has already over-run its proper length.

CRUX

P.S. This letter, with the exception of the first paragraph, is not necessarily meant for publication. But you can make whatever use is necessary of it.

7 3 9 6  
July 18, 1936

CONFIDENTIAL

To the Central Committee of the RSAP  
Amsterdam.

Dear Comrades:

I reply herewith, unfortunately with a one day's delay caused by unfavorable circumstances, to your letter of July 11:

1) You write that you are ready to send two delegates to the conference "if the organizational affairs will be considered as the first point". For my part, naturally, I am not opposed to dealing with the organizational affairs at any point, even the first, if that appears necessary. However, the question can only be decided by the conference itself and I do not see how this matter could be decided in advance. Since I cannot consider your letter as an ultimatum to a not yet convened conference, I conceive the matter in this light, that you reserve the right to insist at the conference itself that the organizational questions be advanced to the first point. Despite the fact that such a procedure seems to me quite irregular and conflicts with my whole experience, I would not make this matter a disputed question and, as for myself, I would accept your proposal. Unfortunately, I do not see any concrete proposals on your part. That our international organization reveals great defects is indisputable; many of these defects, I hope, can be remedied, especially if the Dutch party henceforth does what is necessary in the international organizational work. The most important weaknesses, however, lie in the very nature of our organization, since it is persecuted by all governments. We have no liberty of movement. A part of our leading comrades is in the position of political emigration (I, for example, am among them). This is something that just cannot be talked away. The Russian leadership was always distributed between two, and often enough three centers. The bulk of the Central Committee was in Russia. The emigrants, among them Lenin, were abroad. Despite that, however, they played a certain role in the movement, and often a not entirely bad role. Because of the spatial remove, however, there arose at all times difficulties and friction, which often assumed threatening forms. This can now be very well followed with the aid of the published correspondence carried on for decades. In Europe, under normal conditions, things are different. But the good old times are now gone for Europe, too. We must adapt ourselves to the very specific conditions which constantly grow worse for us all. There is not recipe for this state of affairs to be found anywhere. If one puts great store by mutual collaboration, he must also take into the bargain the negative sides of the certain organizational dispersal that exists. The pre-conference in Bern was proposed precisely for the purpose of making the work of the conference in Geneva as profitable and smooth as possible. I waited a month and a half for this conference. Unfortunately, it did not take place. Also, neither I nor anyone else have, to this day, received any organizational proposals. It is always hard to treat proposals at a conference which have not been brought to the attention of the conference participants in advance. For you will surely understand that it is not only your party that is interested in considering all the important questions beforehand, but also the other organizations. Yet you make the matter still harder by the fact that in your last letter you do not describe by a single word that which you regard as organizational questions. Nevertheless - as stated - I would be prepared, for my part, to devote half of the first day to organizational questions, at least in order to introduce the discussion and to acquaint those present with what the concrete proposals consist of. Then, if final decisions are not immediately arrived at, a commission could be formed to prepare the proposals which could then be brought to the latter half of the closing day of the conference for discussion and final decision. In any case, all these are only suggestions - not binding - on my part.

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2) The most important question, however, is the French revolution. I greatly regret, dear comrades, that I find nothing about it in your letter. Unfortunately, also, much too little in your paper. The fact of Europe, of Holland included and thereby also of your party, is being decided today not in Holland but in France. I recall that about a year or a year and a half ago there was an editorial comment in the "Nieuwe Fakkel" to an article of a comrade of the Bolshevik-Leninists, with something of the following content (I do not have the paper to hand): We do not agree "that the French situation is more important than the German or English". This way of putting the question is abstract and therefore incorrect. It is not a question of the comparison of the historical importance of the various countries, but of the correct evaluation of the revolutionary world conjuncture. The fate of the EUROPEAN working class for decades to come is being decided today in France. Our French section - despite all its difficulties and weaknesses, which I know very well - has become a historical factor which far overshadows all the other sections. To refuse to perceive this would be, at least in my eyes, to be affected by opportunistic blindness. We must support our French section with all our forces, more than our national sections and organizations, for if we take a great step forward in France in the course of the coming months, it will be of immeasurable significance in all the other countries, also, for example, for the impending Dutch elections. If I might translate my thoughts into the language of commerce, 100 Gulden invested now in France would, in the coming period, yield a greater interest than 1,000 Gulden in Holland, Russia or England. That is why I see with a certain apprehension the fact that you actually overlook the question, and even make your participation in the conference dependent, to a certain degree, upon general "organizational" questions which we shall yet settle and which we shall always have to settle over again in the course of years to come. I regarded the conference in the first place as the gathering of the international staff for the purpose of making the French question the international question, and that in every respect.

3) It seems to you superfluous to have to adopt a position towards the London Bureau at the conference. Under no circumstances can I express my agreement with this. The worst obstacle for us, the most malignant enemy, is the London Bureau and its affiliated organization. Your cartoonist, whom I always admire, recently depicted the II and III Internationals as two dogs let loose upon the IV International by imperialism. Unfortunately, he forgot to present the small, mangy cur who scampers around our legs, snarls at us, snaps at ourselves, and seeks by this to prevent us finishing off the big dogs. This is no subordinated question. What the SAP-ILPists signify in a revolutionary period, is shown again by Marceau Pivert and Godafroid in France and in Belgium. The ILPists are not one whit better than the SAPists. This they have amply demonstrated by their evolution in the last two years. As the situation becomes more threatening and more filled with responsibility, the more reactionary and - to us - more inimical do all these old, slick, incorrigible opportunists and pacifists become. One does not fight for the IV International by flirting with them in a closed room, by dancing attendance on them, by paying visits to them, etc. etc. - for all this only gives them an exaggerated opinion of their own importance and incites them to further invasions into our own ranks; no, one fights for the IV International only by pitilessly exposing these little gentlemen and calling them by their right name.

4) Let us take the ILP question. I really cannot reproach myself with any precipitateness in this question. For years I followed the evolution of this party, quite calmly and objectively. After Schmidt's and Pattern's visit to me, from which I learned a good deal, I wrote a series of articles and letters of an entirely friendly kind to the ILP people, sought to enter into personal

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contact with them and counselled our English friends to join the ILP in order, from within, to go through the experience systematically and to the very end. Since the last visit of comrades R. and A. I formulated my observations in this sense, that there isn't much to be done with the ILP. The three of us worked out a definite proposal for our British comrades (a manifesto to the party, collection of signatures, etc.). Comrade Schmidt went to England and judged the plan to be incorrect. Naturally, this was not without its influence on the comrades, as well as on me. I immediately said to myself: Schmidt knows the situation in the ILP better than I do; perhaps he sees in the ILP such aspects as escape me; therefore the decision should perhaps be postponed in order to see the effect of the latest big events (the war in Abyssinia, etc.) at the coming party conference with the ILP. To lose two to three months in a critical period is always a great loss. But it seemed to me, after comrade Schmidt's intervention, that it is necessary to go through this new experience. Well, it is now already behind us. To continue now with an effort to revive the illusion which has been shattered to bits, would be nothing less than to inflict a bad service on the cause. In times of calm, one can live on illusions for a long period; in a period of crisis, if one does not take into account the hard facts, that is, the actual policy of Centrism and pacifism, consequently their deeds, but considers one's own wishes and sentiments, one courts the danger of becoming the shadow of the Centrists and pacifists and of compromising and destroying one's own organization. That is why I deem it absolutely necessary for our comrades to break openly with the ILP and to transfer to the Labour Party where, as is shown especially by the experience of the Youth, much more can be accomplished.

5) You complain in your letter that many parties have carried through tactical turns without preceding international discussion and decision. This complaint does not appear correct to me, especially to the extent that it refers to the American party. The discussion there was extended for more than a year and moreover it was based upon the previous French discussion and experience. ~~The~~ The discussion had an international character. All sections, without exception, took a position on it. The American friends knew quite well the sentiments prevalent in the various sections. Naturally, they could not carry through an international referendum. In the last moment the leadership, considering the situation at the time as highly favorable, took the decision upon itself. It would not have been worthy of the name of a revolutionary leadership if it did not have the courage to make independent decisions. That this leadership is, however, permeated with a truly internationalist spirit, it demonstrated by the fact that two of its representatives have come in order to render an accounting and to take full responsibility for their conduct before the international forum. This seems to me to be the GENUINE internationalism.

6) We cannot make any claim to leading directly our national sections from a center, even if this center were much more united than it is at present. Within the bounds of the united program and the common political line, every section must necessarily lay claim to a certain elbow room in which to act. I am a little surprised that I am obliged to say this to the Dutch friends ~~who~~ who, up to now, carried on their policy absolutely independently and in many important questions in direct contradiction with the firm opinion of the international organization. In this respect, we have always showed the greatest caution and - if you permit - the greatest forbearance especially towards the Dutch party. We shall, I hope, also do this in the future. But we retain the right to our opinion, if not publicly (as was the case with the "Nieuwe Fakkel" with reference to Belgium and quite wrongly), then at least within the bounds of the organization. Unfortunately - and this is a reproach that I must direct primarily at my dear friend Sneevliet - the

R:JAN

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July 18, 1958

the Dutch leadership is impregnated with the spirit of the greatest intolerance towards any criticism. The policy of our American or Belgian friends, to say nothing of the Germans, may be sharply criticized and rejected. But if one attempts to raise the trade union policy of the Dutch brother party, even if only in intimate circles, he is repulsed with the greatest sharpness. Precisely this spirit, which is by no means the spirit of reciprocity, evoked dissatisfaction among very many comrades, and very good ones, in all sections, and this dissatisfaction is justified. It lies in the interest of the general cause as well as of the Dutch leadership to dispel this long accumulating dissatisfaction by means of a calm and friendly ~~discussion~~ exposition at the conference and to stop making a "taboo" out of the Dutch questions. This also belongs among the "organizational" questions that you want to have dealt with as the first point.

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I was unfortunately interrupt the letter in order to catch the airmail in time. You will get the second half of the letter tomorrow. I hasten, however, to say here that I have not the remotest desire or shadow of a desire to loosen the contact with you, to render the already difficult position of the Dutch party more difficult or - parenthetically - to dismy friendship with Sneevliet; I need not assure you of that. I have urged a personal getting together since my arrival in Norway. If I were not bound hand and foot, I would have visited Holland two or three times this year, for I put the greatest store by personal discussions, especially with older and experienced comrades, in these fateful times. It was a holiday in our house when I received the letter that comrades Schmidt and Stein de Zeeuw want to take a trip here. I immediately expressed my joy over this prospect in a letter to Schmidt. Unfortunately, nothing came of it. Sneevliet too promised me a visit, but unfortunately did not keep his promise. I do not want to level reproaches on this score, despite the fact that comrade Schmidt visited the ILP two, if not three, times during this period. In the letter to Shachtman I only wanted to emphasize that a subsequent personal meeting could not replace the official conference and that your non-participation in the conference at a time like this would inevitably be interpreted by the whole public as a political rupture with all our organizations. Fortunately, your participation now seems to me to be assured and therewith we can calmly discuss the "official" and the personal matters.

With fraternal greetings,

2399

JULY 16, 1936

Re Marin

7) I now come to Spain. In one of the latest letters, comrade Sneevliet, in the name of the CS of the party, took up the defense of the Maurin-Nin party against my allegedly exaggerated or too sharp attacks. This not only appears to me to be unjustified but also incomprehensible. The struggle with Maurin does not date from yesterday. His entire policy during the revolution was a nationalistic-provincial and petty bourgeois; reactionary by its entire essence. I recorded this fact publicly more than once from the beginning of the revolution on. Nin too, with those vacillations proper to him, acknowledged this. The program of the "democratic-socialist" revolution is a legitimate child of the Maurinist spirit; it corresponds essentially to the program of a Kautsky and not of a Lenin. As for Nin, during the whole revolution he proved to be a completely passive dilettante, who does not in the slightest degree think of participating actually in the mass struggle, of winning the masses, of leading them to the revolution, etc. He contented himself with hyper-critical little articles on Stalinists, on socialists, etc. This is now a very cheap commodity! During the series of general strikes in Barcelona he wrote me letters on all conceivable questions but did not mention by as much as a word the general strikes and his own role in them. In the course of those years we exchanged hundreds of letters. I always endeavored to receive from him not empty-literary observations on everything and nothing, but practical indications for the revolutionary struggle. To my concrete questions, he always replied: "As to that I shall write in my next letter". This "next letter", however, never arrived - for years. The greatest misfortune for the Spanish section was the fact that a man with a name, with a certain past and the aureole of a martyr of Stalinism, stood at its head and all the while led it wrongly and paralyzed it. The splendid socialist youth came spontaneously to the idea of the IV International. To all our urgings that all attention be devoted to the socialist youth, we received only hollow evasions. Nin was concerned with the "independence" of the Spanish section, that is, with his own passivity, with his own petty political comfort; he didn't want his dilettante captiousness to be disturbed by great events. The socialist youth then passed over almost completely into the Stalinist camp. The lads who called themselves Bolshevik-Leninists and who permitted this, or better yet, who caused this, had to be stigmatized forever as criminals against the revolution. At the moment when Nin's bankruptcy became clear even to his own supporters, he united with the nationalist-Catalonian philistine Maurin, breaking off all relations with us by the declaration that "the IS understands nothing of Spanish affairs". In reality Nin understands nothing of revolutionary policy or of Marxism.

The new party soon found itself in the tow of Azana. But to say about this fact: It is only a small, temporary technical electoral agreement, seems to me to be absolutely inadmissible. The party undersigned the most miserable of all People's Front programs of Azana and simultaneously also its death sentence for years to come. For at every attempt at criticism of the People's Front (and Maurin-Nin are now making such desperate attempts) they will always receive the stereotyped reply from the radical bourgeois, from the social democrats and the communists: But didn't you yourselves take part in the creation of the People's Front and sign its program? and if these gentlemen then try to make use of the rotten subterfuge: "it was only a technical maneuver on our part" - they will only make themselves ridiculous. These people have completely paralyzed themselves, even if they were now expected to display a revolution by will, which is not, however, the case. The small crimes and betrayals which remain almost unobserved in normal times, find a mighty repercussion in the time of revolution. It should never be forgotten that the revolution creates special acoustic conditions. All in all I cannot understand how it is that attenuating circumstances are sought for the Spanish betrayers, while at the same time our Belgian friends, who are fighting with pre-eminence

courage against the enormous POB machine and the Stalinists and who have quite substantial successes to show, are publicly disparaged in the "Nieuw Fakkel".

8) In the latest number of "Batalla" there is an appeal of the Laurin-Nin party to our South American sections, which represents an attempt to group the latter around the so-called "Party of Marxist Unity" on a purely national basis. Like every section of the London Bureau, the Spanish "Marxian" party of course tries to penetrate into the ranks of the IV International, to split them, etc. There you have the little cur who snags at our calves. Must we not say openly to our South American organizations, which still have in their ranks SArist parliamentarians, etc., what the difference is between us and the London Bureau and why Nin breaks with us in Europe and wants to appear in South America as the pietistic unifier of all the revolutionary forces? This contemptible hypocrisy, which always characterizes centrism, must be pitilessly uncovered. This alone would suffice to prove the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY of our theses on the London Bureau.

9) The question of questions at present is the People's Front. The Left Centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical manoeuvre, so as to be able to practise their little business in the shadow of the People's Front. In reality, the People's Front is the MAIN QUESTION OF PROLETARIAN CLASS STRATEGY for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism. For it is often forgotten that the greatest historical example of the People's Front is the February 1917 revolution. From February to October, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionists, who represent a very good parallel to the "communists" and the social democrats, were in the closest alliance and in a permanent coalition with the bourgeois party of the Cadets, together with whom they formed a series of coalition governments. Under the sign of this People's Front stood the whole mass of the people, including the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils. To be sure the Bolsheviks participated in the councils. But they did not make the slightest concession to the People's Front. Their demand was to break this people's front, to rend the alliance with the Cadets and to create a genuine workers' and peasants' government. All the People's Fronts in Europe are only a pale copy and often a caricature of the Russian People's Front of 1917, which could after all lay claim to a much greater justification for its existence, for it was still a question of the struggle against Czarism and the remnants of feudalism. If Maslow and Dubois now coquette with the People's Front, with all their ultra-Leftist "intransigence", they they only prove thereby that they have not understood the real strategic antagonism between Bolshevism and Menshevism. They demanded of us that we put up the slogan "The People's Front in Power", that is, to demand the power for the coalition of the workers and the capitalists. At the same time they made merry over our demand: "Put the bourgeois out of the People's Front!" Hamed in somewhat with reservations, these thoughts are also to be found in an article of Maslow's in the theoretical journal of the Dutch party. For my part I can only regret this, for this fact makes the most painful impression on all of us. Do we have differences of opinion in this question, where it is a matter of choice between Bolshevism and Menshevism? Yes or no? I hope not! Then whence this inexplicable tolerance for Maslow's thoroughly opportunistic conceptions? The position of our French section in all the important questions is incomparably more correct and Marxian, even though there is no sparing of criticism of the French section in our own ranks, as you may see from the brochure of Nicolle Braun. Yet I must say that the text of the French CC "Ou va le gouvernement Blanc?" is an excellent piece of work, which is worth being translated into all the languages of the IV International. As for me personally, I learned a good deal from this brochure. Yet our French comrades are so poor (for which they themselves bear the blame in large measure) that they were unable to publish the brochure in printed, but only in mimeographed form.



10) Permit me now to pass over to the Dutch party. I do not read Dutch. I only halfway decipher the titles, a few sentences, and if the matter appears important to me other comrades come to my aid. I can therefore lay no claim at all to competence in the Dutch question. Nevertheless, I follow as much as possible, by means of the European press, the life of Holland, and in correspondence with my friend Sneevliet (insofar as he replies to my letters, which is not the rule, unfortunately), etc. What I say about the Dutch party can therefore only be incomplete and fragmentary:

a) The great weakness of the Dutch party seems to me to be the lack of a program of action. For more than a year we have had an exchange of opinions with Sneevliet on this score. Insofar as I may permit myself a judgment, the agitation of the party seems to me to rest far too much upon personal improvisations, upon impressions of the day or week, and therefore bears a dispersed, extensive and not a concentrated character. A reformist party can easily reconcile itself to such a situation, but in no way a revolutionary party like the RSAP, for it can fight successfully against the final triumph over the large parties only by means of the clarity and concentratedness of the slogans it has elaborated for the whole present epoch. Several months ago the Dutch party formed a commission to elaborate the program of action. The commission laid out, so at least it appeared to me, too extensive and too comprehensive a plan. For my part I proposed to separate the plan into two parts: first to work out a brief but conclusive program of action for Holland and then to elaborate the large program in connection with other sections as the program of the IV International. Comrade Sneevliet - if I remember rightly - was also of this opinion. Unfortunately it does not appear that this commission has yet produced a single draft. At any rate, I have received none, as was promised me. It is highly regrettable that among other things also for the impending elections we have not armed ourselves in good enough time with a sharp program of action.

b) In the trade union question too I cannot share the policy of our Dutch brother party. The reasons therefore I have often set forth in writing and especially verbally. The MAS-policy continues to be carried out only on the basis of the law of inertia. There is no deeper strategic motivation for it. The development in Holland, just as is now the case in France, will have to strike out either on the revolutionary or the Fascist road. In either case I see no place for the MAS. When the great strike wave will begin in Holland, which should be regarded as highly probable if not certain, the reformist trade unions will grow mightily, absorb fresh elements into their ranks, and in such a period the MAS will appear to the masses as an incomprehensible splinter organization. In consequence, the masses also become unreceptive to the correct slogans of the RSAP and the leadership of the MAS. But if all the members of the RSAP and the best MAS elements were inside the reformist trade unions, then during the impending upsurge they could become the axis of crystallization of the Left wing and later on the decisive force in the labor movement. I must say quite openly: the systematic, solicitously arranged ~~work~~ agitation inside the reformist trade unions seems to me the only means not only of preserving the RSAP as a genuinely independent party (for by itself this hasn't any historical value), but also of carrying it to victory, that is, to power.

c) In the Youth question, the policy of the party does not seem to me to be sufficiently clear. I know that at the head of the Dutch Youth we have very good and promising elements. They must, however, find their field of activity so as not to persist and to wither away in the abstract-sectarian existence of "would-be know-it-all". This field of work can be found only in the trade unions and among the reformist youth. If we continue to lose time, the Dutch youth will fall victim of Stalinism, as is the case in Spain, and to a sub-

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stantial degree also in England. In Belgium, despite the tardiness and despite the much too irresolute vacillating policy, certain successes were nevertheless achieved against Godaf old among the youth. In America, the socialist youth, which certainly does not represent a strong organization, has, thanks to the correct policy of our American co-thinkers, received a good anti-Stalinist inoculation and now finds itself on the right road. It would really be disastrous if our Dutch Youth section were not to understand that it must immediately devote all its forces to work within the reformist youth!

I know, dear comrades, that with many of these observations I come into sharp conflict with the views of certain leading circles of the RSAP. Nor do I lay the slightest claim, not only not for myself (that would be altogether out of the question), but also not for the impending international conference, to the right to alter, in a trice, the position of the RSAP in the decisive questions. As in all of our sections, the necessary change can only mature from within. The other sections can only be of assistance therein, by means of responsible criticism. This letter has no other aim. What we now need is an open discussion on these questions with the Dutch friends in order to promote mutual understanding. For example, I put no concrete proposals to the conference on the Dutch trade union questions and would advise against adopting any binding decision. Our general line in the trade union question MUST be put clearly. I sought to do this in a few lines in the draft on the Franco-Belgian situation. Perhaps, too, independent trade union theses will be submitted. At all events, it would be false to make an organizational ultimatum to the Dutch party out of this question. As unanimously and unambiguously as possible we state our opinion on the trade union question in general and fix this opinion in writing. We discuss openly with the Dutch comrades as to their perspectives. But we respect the special situation in Holland and leave to the Dutch comrades the working out of the necessary methods in the trade union question. THIS IS THE FORMAL PROPOSAL THAT I PUT TO THE CONFERENCE.

11) In conclusion I should still like to say what is necessary on my letter to Shachtman: how and why did I write this letter? The initiative for the conference came from Berne on April 11. The correspondences developed in the course of April and the convocation was planned for the month of June. Thus, nobody can talk of any "precipitation" whatsoever. The fishermen's strike, I believe, did not begin in April nor even in May. In any case, every country now has its strikes and its mass movements and if we're to wait with the international conference until complete calm prevails in every country, we should never be able to hold a conference. The financial and personal difficulties exist everywhere also. All the larger sections were agreed on the necessity of convoking the conference. Only the Dutch section gave evasive answers. In that connection it did not refer so much to the fisherman's strike as it did to the - in its eyes - wrong policy of the American section, to the deficiencies of the IS, to the weaknesses of the French section, etc., etc. Just at the time when we were taking part with the greatest ardor in the work of preparing the conference, of elaborating the theses, etc., there appeared in the "Nieuw Pakkel" a deplorable note on the Belgian section; also, the report on the persecutions of the French section was written in such a manner as to give the appearance of wanting to depreciate the importance of the French section. I received a letter in which comrade Sneevliet, in the name of the Dutch Central Committee, censured me for my article against Maurin-Min. Although the Dutch CC did not give a definite answer to the question of its participation in the conference, it proposed to us to take part "in a few months" in a conference planned by the London Bureau. Everyone who thinks politically will have to admit that these facts give sufficient cause for concern. The whole enterprise hung in mid-air for weeks and we were unable to send the American friends the promised telegram announcing the date. Finally they came to Europe of their own initiative without waiting the telegram. This fact created a force majeure, so to speak, for the organizers of the conference. After all we could not let the American com-

rades return home empty-handed. Right after comrade Erik's arrival here I promptly sent Sneevliet a telegram. For more than 48 hours we received no reply to it. So I sent a second, still more urgent telegram. This was finally answered with the promise of a communication by mail. I communicated my disquietude and my apprehension to comrade Erik in a most moderate and reserved manner and asked him to plead emphatically before the Dutch comrades for their participation in the conference. Comrade Erik had to leave us before the planned pre-conference could be held. After his departure, a letter from comrade Sha. arrived from Amsterdam, the contents of which boiled down to the fact that even now, after the arrival of the Americans, the Dutch comrades were still unable to decide in favor of participation in the conference, that they propose a personal meeting with me for the second half of August and that they make their participation in some eventual conference in Autumn more or less dependent upon the results of this conversation. Naturally, it would have been more advantageous to wait for the report of comrade Erik on his conversations. And that was my first thought. But then I said to myself: if comrade Erik gets the same answer as Sha. then, after the receipt of his report, there will no longer be a possibility of saving the cause of the conference. I had to say that to myself. In the light of the present situation especially in France and considering the arrival of the Americans, I cannot of course explain to myself the attitude of the Dutch comrades on the grounds of lack of funds or of the fishermen's strike, but on much deeper political grounds: many leading Dutch comrades believe they can be of service to the IV International by contact with the London Bureau, that is, by collaboration with the latter and not by means of unremitting struggle against it. For a great number of comrades, however, the contact with the London Bureau signifies nothing but the break with the IV International. I considered it absolutely necessary to bring to the attention of the Dutch comrades this deep-going difference of opinion before they adopt their final decision. The sense of my letter was: if, despite the experience already acquired, you lay store by sitting down at one table with the SAP-ILP etc., then you should at least take a seat at one table with us before that, in order to confer with us on this - for us - so important and decisive question. Let us hope that after all we can come to a common decision. But if you come neither to the pre-conference nor to the conference itself, and further develop your connections with the London Bureau, then we cannot evaluate the consequences of such a procedure in any other way than as the inevitable break with us. In this critical situation I deemed it necessary to express my opinion, quite openly and without adornment, on the possible consequences of the non-participation of the Dutch friends in the conference. This I did in the letter to Sha. and I also sent a copy of the letter to Sneevliet. And I said to myself: if the Dutch comrades have finally come to the decision to seek an entirely different road to the new International than ours, then my letter will no longer hurt. But if their way of action is to be explained only by the fact that they do not ascribe sufficient importance to the thing (which I also already regard as a disquieting symptom) then my letter will call their attention to the fact that FOR US the matter is of DECISIVE importance. The Dutch comrades will then surely utter many a strong word about the letter, but their positions will not be determined by the question of etiquette but by the deep essence of the created situation. In addition I said to myself: Erik is fortunately still in Amsterdam. He will surely do everything to neutralize the negative psychological consequences of my intervention. But his intervention will have all the more positive results the more clearly, openly and frankly the whole situation is disclosed.

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For my letter, therefore, I and I alone bear the responsibility. I am quite ready to take any censure for it, regardless of where it comes from, and let it fall on my shoulders. To "insult" anyone was, obviously, not my intention. It was not a question of moral charges, but of apprehensions arising out of the existence of two contrary lines. If an "insult" can be read out of my letter, I am prepared to withdraw any expression that may give any cause for it and to excuse myself, for it is really not a question of etiquette but of the French revolution and the IV International.

These are my explanations, dear comrades. I greatly regret that I cannot meet with you in Geneva, for I am certain that a personal discussion would eliminate every shadow of discord between us. But even without my presence the conference will surely eliminate the accumulated misunderstandings and create better conditions for the further collaboration.

In this spirit I extend you my hand in all friendship and wish you the best success.

Yours,

Cruz.

2405

CONFIDENTIAL

Copy

To Cannon and Shachtman

Avendia Londres 127  
Coyoacan, D.F.  
Mexico  
May 25, 1937

Dear Comrades:

I must say that the attitude of our comrades inspires me with the greatest anxiety for the future. It is not a question of special differences or of concrete issues, important as they may be, but the whole line of our comrades seems to me to be an opportunistic one. I understand that some formal adaptation, some diplomacy, was inevitable, but I must say that the quantity is largely transformed into quality. The whole line is nothing but a "critical" adaptation to centrism. I must cite two recent documents: (a) the private letter of "max" about the convention, and (b) Shachtman's article, "Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party". The title of this article alone characterizes a false perspective. It seems to me established by the developments, including the last convention, that the party is evolving, not into a "revolutionary" party, but into a kind of ILP, that is, a miserable centrist political abortion without an perspective.

The affirmation that the American Socialist Party is now "closer to the position of revolutionary Marxism than any party of the Second or Third International" is an absolutely unmerited compliment; the American Socialist Party is only more backward than the analogous formations in Europe -- the POUM, ILP, SAP, etc. --- and its backwardness permits the leaders to accept certain general revolutionary motions on war another distant questions which do not impose any direct responsibility on the party. The American Socialist Party has more freedom in the sphere of revolutionary phraseology, and this freedom gives it the possibility of deceiving some naive people and, in part, itself. Our duty is to unmask this negative advantage of Norman Thomas and Co., and not to speak about the "superiority (of the war resolution) over any resolution ever adopted before by the party...." This is a purely literary appreciation, because every resolution must be taken in connection with historical events, with the political situation and its imperative needs. From this point of view the war resolution paves the way for patriotism. Further, the refutation of the People's Front with simultaneous acceptance of the Wisconsin actions is not an "advance" but pure charlatanism.

The article mentions mildly that the convention did not take a position on the Moscow Trials and the Spanish Civil war. Politically this signifies that the convention had not the slightest revolutionary value. On the contrary, it prepares the party to enter a bloc with the Stalinists. The "revolutionary" phraseology serves only to fill up the vacuum until the new turn, which is rooted, not in the brains of the leaders, but in the logic of their whole position.

2406



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The real development showed: (a) that the party is far weaker than it was presumed to be; (b) that the composition of the party is bad (c) that, thanks to these two foregoing circumstances, the centrists are conservative and resistant. It is impossible to lull one's self with the illusion of "conquering" the party. The attitude of passive adaptation threatens, on the contrary, the loss of members of your own fraction. I will not say that the entry into the Socialist Party was a mistake in itself, but the weakness and bad composition of the party gave very limited possibilities to this manoeuvre and ask from us a new orientation and a new policy. I hope that it is not too late to find the correct line without inner crises and damage for the Fourth International.

Schematically one may say: The Inquiry Commission will finish its work in the Fall. It will be a very important stage in the development of our international tendency. We must be ready to regain our full independence at this time. This means that we must have a short and not a long perspective, beginning, not with mild criticism, but with a vigorous and implacable attack against the Wisconsin flunkeys. The Moscow Trials and the Spanish Civil War give us all the necessary weapons with which to reconquer our independence on a higher historical level. |||

I would be glad to learn your opinion on this matter as early as possibly.

With comradely greetings,

(Signed) Wolfe

2407