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The Weberites and Oehlerites in the CLA first broke their pick, in one sense, on abstract and formalistic comparisons in making their political analysis of the AWP. The CLA was a revolutionary Marxian group, they declared (and they were right), and the AWP was a typically Centrist group (and they were wrong because that characterization was inadequate and consequently false). More than one Weberite, for example, wrote and said that the AWP and the SAP of Germany were identical, or, if any difference existed between the two, it was all in favor of the SAP "who are far more developed, capable and intelligent than the Muste people, in fact, who are closer to us than the Musteites" -- as Gletzer put it with his customary penetration and far-sightedness. On the Oehlerite side, this approach led to an antagonistic suspicion to the AWP, so intense that (and this in itself would be a sufficient mark of the sterility of the Oehlerites) when they finally broke from the party they had not won to their banner a single known ex-AWP member. On the Weberite side, this approach led to opposite results, in this sense at least: when they found out that the former AWPers were not the incorrigible Centrists they had falsely labelled them, their astonishment was so great that -- pushed on by their factional considerations as well -- they tore off the old label, affixed exactly the opposite kind to Muste and fell all over themselves to make a bloc with him... against us!

Our analysis of the AWP was quite different from that of either of our CLA opponents. The AWP is a Centrist organization, it is true, but an entirely unique one, with great revolutionary potentialities. Unlike, let us say, the SAP, it did not represent a long established political movement steeped for years in social democratic traditions, permeated by a rigid system of political ideas and dominated by an impervious, mossbacked bureaucracy. Far from it. Its Centrism was of a fresh, vigorous, immature kind. It merely represented the temporary transitional phase of a movement from militant trade unionism and activism in the class struggle to a revolutionary political party. It was groping for its program and was distinctly receptive to Marxian influence. With the exception of a Salutsky or two, who represented confirmed Menshevism and systematic opposition to Marxism, but who were not authentically representative of the movement they temporarily headed or influenced, even the leadership of the AWP could not be mentioned in the same breath with the ossified Centrists at the head of the SAP.

From this analysis we concluded that the forces contributed to the new party by the AWP could not and would not offer any fundamental, organized, political difficulty in the progress of the fusion. Salutsky-Hardman had been disposed of with ease, without either political or organizational convulsions; and this was very significant for the future, because if this trained Right wing politician could do nothing even to begin to disrupt the fusion, then there was every reason to believe that the Right wing elements, confined essentially to scattered or confused individuals, would not constitute a serious problem inside the party.

They would not constitute a serious problem, that is, if the comrades of the CLA in particular conducted themselves in such a way as not to bring about a crystallization of the dispersed and isolated Right wing forces into a firm Right wing faction, with a worked-out platform and rallying center of its own. Our analysis of the situation led us to the conclusion that the Right wing elements in the AWP could become a danger to the new party only if irresponsible, formalistic ultra-Left sectarians from the CLA were permitted to act so as to drive the Right elements together into a force. Only with the involuntary but nonetheless effective assistance of these sectarians could the Right wing hope to keep alive and heighten the prejudices of many AWP militants against the fusion, against the "Trotskyists" and against "Trotskyism".

These ideas were not formed in our minds as a post-factum explanation of what

happened in the internal disputes of the WP. We were prepared for these disputes, and prepared to hold the party together, precisely because these ideas were developed by us in advance. After pointing out that the years of training it had undergone had prepared the CLA cadre to act as a firm spinal column for the new party, the Shachtman-Cannon pre-convention thesis of the CLA warned, as far back as the Fall of 1934:

"Nor is this analysis to mean that the League forces which contribute to the building of the new party can convert themselves into a cast of Brahmins, loftily deigning to confer their leadership upon a lower caste. Such an attitude would not only be despicable and unworthy of revolutionists, but would automatically guarantee the reduction of the new party movement to a hopeless sect. The heart of a movement must be an integral part of it -- not something apart from it -- working together harmoniously with all the other organs and parts of the movement, pumping blood throughout the whole organism and constantly receiving new blood. Otherwise the whole organism withers and dies. An attitude of Communist priggishness or conceit, especially towards elements, groups, forces that may take up the ranks of the new party other than those coming from our League, would be equivalent to isolating our ideas from the ideas of the party, would be equivalent to facilitating the domination of non-Communist ideas and elements in the party. We have no narrow factional interests or aims in the new party movement; of all the available forces, we are merely the most persistent, the most conscious and advanced, the most consistent element. We can make no greater contribution than this, nor do we need to."

At the same time, the NC-majority was apprehensive about certain elements that the CLA would contribute to the fusion and warned against any religious attitude towards anybody in the new party just because we had once carried a membership card in the CLA: "This does not mean that any iron guarantees can be given for this cadre. Nor does it mean that the cadre is all that could be wished for, or all that is needed. The biggest tests of the cadre are still ahead. And secondly, its value is not absolute but relative...."

This analysis dictated to us our course in the first period of the existence of the WP. We knew there were many in the ranks of the CLA -- above all, Cehlerites -- whose eyes gleamed at the thought of entering the new party for the purpose of ramming a course on "Bolshevization" a la Zinoviev down the throats of a lot of "damned Centrists". We determined to set ourselves firmly against this thoroughly unhealthy tendency. For one reason and another, many of the best militants of the AWP were beset with apprehensions about the CLA contingent in the fusion, about what they thought to be (or had been mis-taught to think was) our exclusive preoccupation with everything in the world save the class struggle in the United States; our inability or unwillingness to participate in the daily life of the American proletariat; our predilection for endless discussion of obscure theoretical questions, of remote problems, of hairsplitting Talmudism. These and other prejudices had to be dispelled for two good reasons: firstly, they were without foundation insofar as they referred to the "Trotskyist" movement, however well-based they may have been with regard to this or that individual or group in it; secondly, with these prejudices prevalent even in a section of the new party, it would be unable to function harmoniously and effectively, with mutual confidence among the ranks and the leadership.

Now, that was our political analysis, from which flowed our political line in the fused party, from which, in turn, flowed our "organizational methods". The three constituted a harmonious whole.

At the other end of the CLA stood the Cehler group. If its course is really to be understood, it must be explained politically. Otherwise, it will remain in

the recollections of some comrades as some strange, incomprehensible, inexplicable phenomenon produced by psychological conditions or personal caprice. The political analysis of the Cehler group, to put it in a word, was that the WP was a Centrist party. The political line of the Cehler group, in another word, was to recruit inside this party for their anti-Trotskyist faction and to split this faction from the party at the earliest moment. Its organizational methods flowed from this analysis and line, could not but have flowed from them, and cannot be explained without them as their basis. Let us establish these assertions from the record and from other verifiable facts.

There can be little doubt now that if the CIA had not fused with the WWP the Cehler group, like the Bauerites in Germany and Llukhierites in France, would have split away from the American section of the ICL to form an independent sect of their own. If they did not split from us before or during the CIA convention, it was only because they saw the opportunity of escaping the discipline of the ICL by joining the unaffiliated new party and continuing to work for their platform within its ranks. That is the only reason why, after we pressed them to the wall so relentlessly at the CIA convention, they pledged themselves to loyal collaboration with the ICL in the new party, pledged themselves to abide by the decisions of the plenum of the ICL which endorsed the "French turn", and pledged themselves to dissolve their faction upon entering the new party.

All their pledges were merely a ruse, a disloyal strategem. His real position was formulated by Cehler in the resolution he presented on the ICL Plenum, stating that "the comrades in the SFIO have contrary to the resolution furled the banner of the Fourth International and raised the banner of organic unity. Let him who dares assert the contrary. By declaring for organic unity the comrades in the SFIO have given positive support to the social patriots of both parties. They have thereby assumed a share of the responsibility of the treachery which is in preparation. The Plenum shares the responsibility of our French comrades...."

In other words, Cehler gave the following political characterization of the forces remaining loyal to the ICL and its principles: they have furled the banner of the Fourth International; they are assistants of the social patriots and they share the responsibility for treason to the proletariat. Such elements, included among whom were Cannon and Shachtman, could not lead a revolutionary Marxian party except to new treacheries. Only the Cehlerites, by their activities inside the new party, could convert it from Centrist to Marxism. "The unfinished work of ideological clarification and solidification of the force that must be the Marxian core of the new party," declared Stamm in his resolution at the CIA convention, "remains to be done and will have to be carried out inside the new party." But precisely because this work had not been done preliminary to founding the party, it was Centrist, for, let us not forget, in the Cehlerite conception the new party is Centrist if it has a "non-Marxian program through omissions". If further evidence is required from documents, it may be found in the fact that the Cehlerite, J. Gordon, voted in the New York District Committee to admit to party membership the four ex-Weisbordites who applied to the WP with the statement that they disagreed with our Declaration of Principles and considered the WP a Centrist party!

It should further be remembered that included in the Cehlerite dogmas is the conception that a reformist or Centrist party cannot be "reformed". Cehler's whole argument against the supporters of the "French turn" was based on this absurd contention. It is absolutely essential, he argued, to give any group we may send into a reformist or Centrist party a split perspective in advance. These stupidities can be found in any of the Cehlerite documents. But stupid or not, is beside the point here. Important is the fact: the Cehlerite "Marxist group" entered the "Centrist" WP with the fundamental aim of splitting as large as possible a force from it to form the American section of the Cehlerite International. Especially confirmed in

this line were the Oehlerites because of their conviction that the "French turn" supporters necessarily had to follow the same tactic in this country, they say what they will, they would inevitably "liquidate the independent party" into the "stinking corpse of the Second International" in the United States. Finally, the Oehler doctrine declares that if revolutionary Marxists are in a non-Marxian party, they do not adhere to the discipline of the Centrist or reformist leadership, but obey only their own "revolutionary discipline". The tactics, the policies, and above all the organizational methods pursued by the Oehlerites in the party and especially in the internal fight, flowed from this political analysis and line -- and could flow from no other. That is how we explained it for months and months in the recent period. No other political explanation for their conduct has been offered; none can be.

Virtually the day after the new party was formed, therefore, saw the beginning of Oehler's activities to finish "the unfinished work of ideological clarification and solidification". And these activities resulted in throwing the party into a frenzied fever, into one riot after another, into a hounding and persecution campaign which reproduced on a small scale all the evil sides of the notorious Zinovievist "Bolshevization" campaign of 1925.

Not satisfied with the clear-cut position taken on the Stalinist Kirov campaign by the significant joint editorial in the New Militant signed by Muste and Cannon, the Oehlerites (and -- need we add? -- the Weberites) demanded immediately a general membership meeting in New York. For what purpose? In order to "put the AWP leaders on the spot" on the "Russian question". That's what the Oehlerites were interested in.

At the very first meeting on the trade union question, where concrete tasks of trade union work were to be discussed, the Oehlerites made a concerted effort to change the trade union line of the party -- and that in a Zackian direction.

With hardly a month of existence behind the party, the Oehlerites began a savage campaign against Howe, the AWP representative in the editorship of the New Militant. In Philadelphia, the Oehlerites made a public attack, at a WP lecture, on the ex-AWP'er, Ludwig Lore, who was speaking from the party platform and as an official party speaker. In New York, Oehler and Stamm, at the membership meeting to discuss the Russian situation, violated the elementary discipline of the NC to which they belonged by making an open attack on the official NC reporter, Shachtman. (Again, need we add that Weber and Gould did the same thing at a subsequent meeting?) Demands were made for the immediate expulsion of Solon, also a former AWP member.

In the case of Budenz, the Oehlerites raised a ruse and cry throughout the party about the terrible "right danger" which threatened to inundate the organization and sweep it into the swamp of reformism. In the case of the discussion of the language-branch question, the Oehlerites created another riot in the party, with Basky, a member of the NC (and -- need we add? -- Weber, who, member of the NC though he was, signed a round-robin attack on the NC position together with the Oehlerite Gordon in the New York DC), violating NC discipline by openly agitating in the ranks against its position. The famous "West resolution" of perspectives with regard to the SP was immediately taken out of the ranks of the PC which was discussing it, disloyally misrepresented and distorted beyond recognition by the Oehlerites, and another ruse and cry raised against the "liquidators" in the leadership.

At every other meeting of the PC, Oehler and Stamm would appear with a new "thesis" to help "finish" the "unfinished work", and with a proposal for an immediate discussion to be arranged in the party on this "thesis". Time and again -- with

the party not yet three months old! -- the Oehlerites in the PC demanded an internal discussion bulletin -- not to discuss organizational problems of the party, problems arising out of the work of carrying out the tasks set down for the party by the fusion convention, but political questions properly belonging to a pre-convention period, and at that, questions which were not and could not be of primary importance to a party just attempting to organize and launch itself in the class struggle. And in order further to hamstring the party and its work, Oehler proposed a bare month after the party was formed (January 21) that "any member of the PC has a right to call for a roll-call vote of all NC members on any issue he considers of sufficient importance" -- a proposal that would simply have paralyzed the PC and prevented it from carrying out a single decision with which Oehler did not happen to agree. A more utterly unrealistic and sectarian line for the party could hardly be imagined than the one pursued by Oehler and CG. prior to the Pittsburgh Plenum of the NC in March 1935.

The fact that the Oehlerite line and methods were good for absolutely nothing at all -- except perhaps for the complete disruption of the fusion -- is shown concretely in the reaction to them of all the former members of the AWP, and especially of the active militants. Far from accomplishing the "unfinished work of ideological clarification and solidification", the Oehlerites succeeded only in heightening all the apprehensions and prejudices that had ever existed in the minds of these militants. And what good are all the highfalutin' and fine-sounding theories about the "imperative need of ideological clarification" on various problems if those you seek to "clarify" are repelled, react violently against you and are driven right into the arms of those you claim you are fighting -- the Right wing? If the antagonistic reaction to Oehlerism in New York during those early months, from Kuste down to the humblest rank and file of the old AWP, were not enough to bring the irresponsible sectarians to their senses, the identical reaction of all the serious field workers who came to the Pittsburgh Plenum should have accomplished that purpose. But it simply made no difference in the Oehlerite line. And that for the simple reason that, as experience shows, some sectarians are entirely hopeless, incorrigible.

The Pittsburgh Plenum took a firm and unequivocal position with regard to the Oehlerite line. On the unanimous decision of the full NC (against the votes of Oehler and Stamm, of course), Shachtman gave a detailed report on the situation to the Active Workers Conference assembled at the same time and which the Oehlerites, with the aid of their latest recruit, Zack, had tried to disrupt at the very opening session. The report represented, formally, the line of the Political Committee for the first three months of its existence. In a more direct sense, it represented also the line elaborated even before then and followed since by Cannon and Shachtman.

In it, Shachtman put forward the general conceptions outlined on previous pages of this document. The fused party represented a unity of two different streams. It was only at its inception. It is ridiculous to imagine that the unity is all accomplished by the mere fact of a unity convention. Its real unification and solidification can be effected only in the course of joint work and joint elaboration of policy, the prerequisite for which is the breaking down of old organizational barriers, mutual political and psychological suspicions, the establishment of mutual confidence, and above all the establishment of an atmosphere which makes possible effective joint work and joint elaboration of policy. The unity which we worked so hard and carefully to establish can easily be disrupted, especially if anything is done to heighten the feeling, on one side, that the other is composed of windbags, hairsplitters and spittoken philosophers, and on the other side, that the first is composed of hard-boiled centrists and opportunists. Instead of sharpening and crystallizing prematurely and unnecessarily any divergent tendencies that may exist, it is imperative (especially in view of the fact that both organizations

had just gone through a solid year of internal discussion prior to the fusion!) to plunge the party into concrete day-to-day work, to create a normal atmosphere instead of a super-heated one, to make possible the assimilation of all assimilable elements and not to declare, a priori, that this, that or the other comrade is unassimilable and must have an "ideological campaign" launched against him.

The main core of the party leadership is sound, and it is essential to facilitate the collaboration its ranks, precisely in order that it may be able, unitedly, to deal with inimical and unabsorbable elements, and deal with them in such a way and at such a time as will not create the suspicion in anyone's mind that the leadership is out to chop off heads, or -- to put it more plainly -- that the ex-CIAers are out to "Bolshevize" the party over-night by lopping off -- whether for good reasons or not -- one AWP man after another. The party is not only very young, but in many sections, very immature. It is stupid to approach every one of its internal problems as if it were a solid, long-established, "old-Bolshevik" party and to act accordingly. It is like a political baby, in many respects, and it must be nursed along through all the disorders of infant growth. Essentially, that is the way to cement the fusion under the concrete conditions obtaining at the time. The Cehler line, sectarian and factional, is the way to disrupt the fusion.

The cry of superior derision that went up from the super-Bolshevik ranks of the Cehlerites (and -- need we add? -- the Weberites) at the phrase "nurse the baby"! The very fact of their disdainful mockery of a formula whose political essence was unassailable revealed their utterly false estimate of our problem. They approached the WP, in which the unity was by no means firmly knit, with the same attitude as those other great Bolshevizers of the American Communist Party, under Pepper, about whom Trotsky wrote so tellingly that they had already armed the CP "from head to foot with all the attributes of 'revolutionary organization', so that it looks like a six-year-old boy wearing his father's equipment".

The Pittsburgh Plenum of the PC adopted a resolution on the situation which endorsed the main line of the PC for the three months of its activity and rejected the Cehlerite line as "sectarian and factional". This resolution was not only supported by Muste and ourselves, but it represented our political and organizational line: hit at the sectarians as the greatest obstacle to the fusion and who threaten to crystallize a Right wing in the party, and strengthen the collaboration between the two main forces in the fusion upon whom its unity and progress depended most of all, namely, Cannon and Shachtman of the CLA and Muste and his friends of the AWP.

The censure of the Cehlerites adopted at Pittsburgh did not, however, cause them to suspend their ultra-factional activities. Rendered desperate by this first, mild warning, the Cehlerites merely intensified their attacks upon the party line and the party leadership. Immediately after the Pittsburgh Plenum they launched a new hysteria campaign against the "Right danger". "The Budenz article," reads a statement by Stamm-Basky-Cehler to the PC on April 20, "published before the Plenum -- and the fact that several leading comrades -- How Johnson, Truax -- have identified themselves with the ideas advocated in this article since the Plenum, indicates that a number of comrades in the ranks of the party also support these ideas, prove that contrary to the Pittsburgh Plenum resolution a danger from the Right exists in the party... The PC should now change its course. It should declare that the danger to the party comes from the Right. It should wage an ideological struggle in the party against the Budenz platform."

Again, in accordance with our line, the PC rejected this estimate, and reaffirmed ours, namely, that the principal danger to the party emanated from the ultra-Left sectarians. Were we correct or was Cehler? It would be sufficient answer to refer to the fact that two months later, at the June Plenum, Cehler did not so much

as mention the "Right danger" which, as late as the end of May, he had been rabble-rousing the party against. An even more effective answer and a confirmation of the entire correctness of our evaluation, is contained, however, in the results themselves. We said that while there were Right elements, they constituted no particularly acute danger; that the party, by proceeding intelligently and not hysterically, would isolate the individual Right wingers and eliminate them without a convulsion in the party, without a party crisis.

And that is precisely what happened. The party was able to slough off unasimilable elements who had formerly been outstanding leaders of the ATP, and enjoyed the esteem and warm support of the ATP ranks, not only without causing a crisis in the party, but without losing any of the party's ranks to these Right wing figures. Budenz went over to Stalinism, but our policy prevented him from taking along a single member. Howe dropped out entirely, but he dropped out alone. Lora was expelled, but nobody went away with him. Solca and Calverton disappeared from the party horizon, but it never caused a ripple in our ranks. Breizer resigned from the party, but nobody, either in Allentown or Pittsburgh, followed him out of the organization.

Aren't these facts a crushing refutation of the Oehlerite hysteria and the Oehlerite line, as well as a complete confirmation of the correctness of the analysis we made and the course we based upon it? These facts show what our political line and our organizational methods with regard to the Right wing elements, looked like in reality and what they achieved for the party. Now let us see what the facts show about our line and methods with regard to the ultra-Leftists in the party.

The sectarians, we contended, constitute, at the present junction, the principal danger to the party, the greatest obstacle to its normal, healthy progress. Their association, even in the last period of the CLA, with an international clique of splitters, of reactionary anti-Trotskyists, convinced us from the very beginning that, if they were to continue their line in the new party, we would inevitably come to an organizational parting of the ways with them. Does this mean that we had established, in advance, an expulsion policy towards the Oehlerites and that we were merely waiting for a "pretext" on which to expel them? Or does it mean that we were wrong in having failed to expel them in the CLA rather than permit them to enter as a disruptive force into the composition of the new party? Neither one is correct, and for the following three reasons:

1. Under our pressure, the Oehlerites pledged themselves at the CLA convention to remain loyal to the decisions of the convention, and to conduct themselves in a loyal manner inside the new party.

2. Even if we had considered it correct to refuse to take this political declaration at its face value, it would have been impossible at that time to convince the comrades of the ATP that the Oehlerites should not be admitted into the new party; it would have been wrong to hold up the fusion until the ATP was made fully acquainted with all the details of the struggle that had gone on in the CLA with the Oehlerites, first, because with regard to the fusion the question was settled, and second, because with regard to the "French turn" the question was not before the new party and it would have been the height of political unreality to demand a position on this question before we would consent to fusion; finally, it was necessary -- assuming the continuation of the Oehlerite line in the new party -- to permit the ATP comrades to draw the conclusions about Oehlerism from their own experience with it, instead of attempting, in advance, to impose upon the ATP the conclusions we had drawn about Oehler from our experience.

3. Finally, since it is not always true that once a sectarian always a sectarian, we had to take into account the possibility that joint work in the new party, a

new attempt at comradely collaboration and common working out of the political line of the party, would bring the Oehlerites to a change in their line. Just because we did not have an a priori expulsion policy with regard to Oehler and Co., we made it possible for him to enter the new party on an equal basis with all others, with equal opportunities for work and collaboration, unprejudiced by his position in the CIA. At the same time we did not intend to relax our vigilance against the first manifestations of their sectarian line. Create the conditions that will facilitate their absorption into the main stream of the party, give them posts and responsibilities; but demand of them, in addition to these rights, the obligation of every other party member, namely, submission to general party discipline.

That is exactly what we thought in theory and exactly what we carried out in practice. No attacks were levelled at Oehler, Stamm and Basky after the new party had come into existence. We immediately proposed that Oehler take over the highly important work of special organizer in Southern Illinois, a strategic field from the standpoint of our trade union work and work among the unemployed. Oehler demurred because he wanted to remain in the center to direct the activities of his faction in completing the "unfinished work"; he insisted on becoming educational director of the party. We acquiesced to his proposal. Stamm, whom we proposed as manager of the New International, also objected to this post and demanded that he be placed in the work of the IFLD. Here too we considered our proposal the more correct one, but in the interest of obtaining the maximum collaboration of all elements, we finally acquiesced to Stamm's proposal also, and assigned him to defense work. Basky we placed in charge of the work in the foreign language field. Other "Leftists" were dealt with in the same manner.

It was Cannon who proposed that Zack be assigned to the post of special trade union organizer in New York, so that the party might fully utilize the contacts among the independent unionists which Zack claimed to have. It was Cannon who proposed, further, that Williamson, another Oehlerite, be assigned as a special organizer among the New York Negroes. Zack had an Eastern tour of the party arranged for him. In a word, every effort was made by us to facilitate honest collaboration with the ultra-Leftists, to make possible their assimilation into the normal life of the party. In face of all these facts, the story about our deep-eyed plot to "get" the "Left wing" from the very beginning, belongs in the realm of fiction and fancy, and not of reality.

This deliberate policy of ours, however, was evidently interpreted by the Oehlerites as a sign of weakness. The series of riots organized by them, especially in New York, which culminated in the shameless attempt to disrupt and disorganize the Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh -- even that did not encounter any severe action on our part. All we proposed at the Pittsburgh Plenum was a censure of their factionalism and a characterization of their sectarianism. No measures were proposed or taken against them, although they were richly deserved. The motion adopted in March was intended as a second warning to the Oehlerites -- the first had been given them at the CIA convention -- against a continuation of their sterile, disruptive course. We continued to hope that, with the overwhelming majority of the party obviously against them, the Oehlerites might be convinced of the injuriousness of their course and that, while continuing to grant them every right to present their special point of view on any question in normal party ways, we would not be compelled to proceed against them with organizational actions.

Our hopes to steer the party through the sectarian danger without sharp measures, were dashed by the intensified factionalism of the Oehlerites following the Pittsburgh Plenum, culminating in their actions in connection with the Zack case. These actions finally convinced us that the Oehlerites had embarked upon a desperate course which could be ended only by allowing them to paralyze or smash the party or

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Our hopes to steer the party through the sectarian danger without sharp measures, were dashed by the intensified factionalism of the Cehlerites following the Pittsburgh Plenum, culminating in their actions in connection with the Zack case. These actions finally convinced us that the Cehlerites had embarked upon a desperate course which could be ended only by allowing them to paralyze or smash the party or

by bringing them up short with summary disciplinary measures. What other course could responsible revolutionary leaders take but the latter?

It is sometimes possible, with the aid of events themselves and the superior position which Marxism has as compared with sectarianism, to win an ultra-Leftist current to the correct position in time. Marx, Lenin, Trotsky were able to do it more than once. Patience, and the knowledge that time is working for the Marxist standpoint, are required on the part of the leadership in order to deal properly with sectarians as well as with Right wing opportunists. There are, to be sure, limits to patience; and as a rule these limits are established when a recalcitrant group, however valuable may be individual members of it, conducts itself in so irresponsible and disruptive a manner as to threaten the very existence of the organization itself. That is why the principle of democratic centralism is of such indispensable value to the movement. While affording minorities all the rights in the world to present their standpoint and defend it through normal party channels and under the guidance of the leadership which the party has selected to direct and safeguard the organization -- the party must insist that discipline be maintained, that the minority, which is striving to become the majority of tomorrow, submit to the majority of today.

If the sectarians (or Right wingers) refuse to obey this discipline, then, however regrettable it may be, there comes the parting of the ways. It has happened before our time; it will probably happen again in the future. It is an inevitable concomitant of political evolution under certain circumstances. With all their wisdom and skill, even such great leaders as Marx and Lenin and Trotsky found themselves faced on more than one occasion with an incorrigible group of unassimilable elements. An organizational rupture is never desirable; it should be averted if possible; it should not be wept over if it proves to be inevitable; and above all, of more importance than a small split is the safeguarding of the political line and the organizational integrity of the party.

Any other approach means dilletantism, anarchism, petty bourgeois dabbling, but not serious revolutionary politics. Any other approach means the disintegration of the movement: for all that a member or a group would have to do in order to break up the party would be to say: I have a political difference with the party leadership or the party line; therefore, I am under no obligations to obey party discipline. Grant that right to Oehler today, and Smith will take it tomorrow, and Jones the day after, until the party is completely disaggregated.

The Zack case was precipitated by his flagrant breach of party discipline at the public meeting addressed by Cannon in New York on our trade union line. Basing himself on a motion unanimously adopted by the PC on January 21, 1935, which called for a dissociation by the party from the trade union line put forward by Zack, Cannon took occasion in the course of his remarks to state that while Zack had every right and opportunity to put forth his special standpoint inside our party, which does not seek for a Stalinist monolithism, it nevertheless had to be understood that the official party line was not that of Comrade Zack. This perfectly normal procedure, followed in the communist movement for years without anybody feeling "offended" or considering it a "monstrous provocation", was answered by Zack, speaking on his own authority and without permission from the party, rising in the meeting and taking public issue with the official representative of the party. This procedure was not only the exact opposite of "perfectly normal", but Zack, who knows what proper communist procedure is, knew it to be the case in this instance.

That this was no accidental occurrence, was evidenced by the fact that at the same time Zack had sent a letter to the Minneapolis comrades, engaged in an action and pursuing the line unanimously adopted by the Political Committee, in which he

urged them to reject the PC policy and to adopt his. It goes without saying that when Zack was a functionary of the CP, both in the pre-Stalinist and the post-Leninist periods, he would never have dreamed of writing a letter to a group of comrades in another city who were engaged in a class struggle action, with the proposal that they cast out the Central Committee policy and adopt his own. Such a letter would have been as much as his membership card was worth, and rightly so. This too Zack knew perfectly well to be the case.

And to give final evidence of his intention to break with the party, Zack, it was revealed, had sponsored an enterprise called the "Independent Unionist", a semi-political, semi-trade union paper, which Zack was to edit, but which the party knew absolutely nothing about, concerning which Zack had never taken the trouble to consult with the party, or even to give it the faintest notification that such a periodical was being planned.

The Political Committee thereupon decided to file charges against Zack immediately, and to propose to his branch that he be promptly expelled. With the exception of Stamm, the PC decided upon this measure unanimously. Here too we acted entirely in accordance with our line of loyal collaboration with the former members of the AWP. Not a single step was taken against Zack, and later against Stamm-Basky-Oehler, without previous consultation between us and the former AWP members of the PC: McKinney, Lore and West. Not only these comrades, but Muste, who was then in Toledo, was kept fully informed not only of the situation but also of our proposals and our perspectives. The story, later invented to serve as a factional platform against us, about the naive, innocent lambs, Lore, McKinney and Muste, who were bewitched and misled by the ogre Cannon, is too dull a fable even for infants.

Cannon's speech at the mass meeting was unanimously endorsed by the PC (always, of course, with the exception of the Oehlerites). The preferring of charges against Zack was unanimously decided by the PC, all of whose members are past the age of six. The defense of the PC position was entrusted jointly to Swabeck, McKinney and Sherman in the Bronx branch, of which Zack was a member. The decision of the Bronx branch, controlled by Oehlerites, to exonerate Zack, was unanimously reversed by the PC and Zack just as unanimously expelled. The decision to bring charges against Stamm and Basky (later, also Oehler) for flagrant violation of discipline in attacking the PC before the membership and circulating documents without authorization, was made unanimously by the PC. Muste knew every single detail of what was happening; so did Weber. Neither one of them uttered a single word of protest, not one!

Muste's reproduction (in part; it would be better if he printed it in full) of the "notorious" Cannon letter to him in Toledo, which is supposed to prove the "disloyal" conspiracy against the Oehlerites and the AWPers plotted by us, proves precisely the contrary. By the picture it gives of the situation, by the account it gives of our proposals in the PC, by the account it gives of our perspectives with regard to the Oehlerites, it should be perfectly plain that we worked openly and fraternally with Muste and his associates, that nothing mysterious and concealed had been plotted.

"On returning recently from Ohio," said Muste at the June Plenum, "to the center, I found the party in the turmoil with which all of us are now familiar. I was aware from a letter sent me by Comrade Cannon which I will submit to the Plenum when we deal with the internal situation that it was the purpose of himself and others to secure the expulsion of the Oehler-Stamm group at this plenum. I had reason on the basis of this same letter to connect this proposed organizational measure with the policy of Comrade Cannon in re the so-called SP orientation with which I differ and which I regard as most injurious to the WP at this time..." And later, in a statement to the PC meeting of August 5, still repeating all the Oehlerite buncombe which constituted three-fourths of the Muste platform in these months.

Muste denounced "Cannon's monstrous provocation at the Zack meeting in May".

Muste not only has a most unfortunate and undignified habit of crawling out from under the responsibilities indicated by his political position of the day before, with the plaintive cry that he was tricked or misled by some shrewd schemer, but he also has the disconcerting habit of forgetting this Monday that he signed his name to last Monday, and forgetting so thoroughly or else attaching so little importance to his political documents, that they stand in glaring conflict with each other. Read the above characterizations of our conduct in the Zack affair, and then read the PC statement on it, dated June 4, a week before the Plenum, sent to all party branches by the party secretary, Muste, and approved by him in the Secretariat. In that document, for which one would imagine Muste would maintain sufficient responsibility to stand by it for a week, an entirely different picture of the Zack affair is presented:

"There were numerous and repeated demands from comrades in New York for a public exposition of our (trade union) policy by means of a lecture. The lecture of Comrade Cannon served this aim. The internal situation, Zack's opinion on the 'French turn', the plot to 'capitulate to the SP', the derelictions of other comrades, etc., had nothing to do with this matter. These issues were not under discussion at the meeting... Under the circumstances it was necessary for the party speaker to bring the confusion created by Zack to an end. To do so in a public speech, and subsequently to publish extracts of the speech in the New Militant, was the best means for this public clarification. There was nothing abnormal or unprecedented in this procedure. It was the right and more than that, the duty of the party to make its position clear. The only criticism in order is the neglect to do so earlier. The assertion that the speech of Comrade Cannon was an 'outrageous' and 'provocative attack on a party member' is sheer nonsense."

Muste not only signed this statement and sent it out, but helped to edit it! But this does not prevent him from continuing to repeat all kinds of "sheer nonsense" -- as he called it on June 4 -- about the Zack affair every time he has occasion to talk about it. As to other aspects of the Muste political line and organizational methods following his abrupt rupture of the collaboration with us, more will be said later. Suffice it here to point out, in conclusion, that at no time between his return from Ohio and the opening of the June Plenum did Muste, either by mail, in formal meeting, or in informal discussions have one single word of criticism to make of the line we had pursued in the PC towards the violations of discipline of Zack, Oehler, Stamm and Basky. While, on the eve of the Plenum, he expressed himself in private conference with us at Cannon's home against any expulsion of Oehler & Co. at the Plenum, he nevertheless agreed that some disciplinary action would have to be taken, and never for a single moment intimated that he considered Cannon's public speech a "monstrous provocation" or that it was connected with the "SP orientation". On the contrary, he signed his name and gave approval to the whole line of the PC statement on the situation sent out to the branches on June 4. These are facts, which are, as is commonly known, very stubborn things.

But didn't Cannon and Shachtman nevertheless propose the expulsion of Oehler-Basky-Stamm in June? Triumphantly, Lere asked that the following be noted in the minutes of the June Plenum: "In the course of the Muste report, when Muste remarked 'you can't expel Oehler, Stamm and Basky, etc., now anyway' Shachtman replied: 'Because you won't vote with us'." Quite right! The flagrant defiance of elementary party discipline by the sectarian trinity, their irresponsible disruptiveness, showed us that they had become a hopeless cancer that had to be eradicated from the party. We were prepared to take final and drastic measures on the assumption that the party, in its vast majority, was equally prepared. We were justified in this assumption by the fact that all the Musteite leaders, Muste included, had signified their intention to go through with the action we proposed. Together, we represented

90% of the party.

When it became evident that Muste was unloading responsibility, when he finally demurred at the proposal for drastic measures against the splitters, we concluded: An important part of the party and its leadership either fails or refuses to see eye to eye with us in this question. They are apparently not yet convinced of the correctness of our proposal, or of the acute danger represented by the Oehlerites. The party must therefore pay a heavy price for their blindness by spending invaluable time in educating these vacillating timid leaders to the fact that a cancer must not be temporized with and that the Oehlerites represent a cancer. We shall therefore also be compelled to pay the Oehlerite blackmailers, and leave them run rampant through the party for another period, until we have argued the matter out with Muste and Weber and their followers and convinced them of the incompatibility of Oehlerism with party membership. That is why we did not press for the expulsion of the Oehlerites at the June Plenum, but merely for another warning, another censure; that is how we lost three precious months, between June and October, until, at the latter date, Muste-Weber reluctantly agreed to our original proposal for action against the Oehlerites.

But didn't Cannon and Shachtman oppose any discussion in the ranks? Didn't they try to expel Oehler without a preliminary political discussion? And didn't Weber and Muste fight for months for such a discussion and finally force one, thus saving the party? This legend, too, it would be well to dispel, not merely because it represents another Muste-Weberite plagiarism from Oehler, but because it isn't true.

A good half of the Weberite platform against us, and Muste's as well, is based on this legend, and its counterpart, namely, that they were for a discussion. It wasn't that Weber had any political differences with us over estimating the Oehler danger, but he and Muste opposed our "organizational" methods in liquidating Oehlerism. "The Cannon group," writes the ineffable Gletzer in his November 20, 1935 letter to the IS, "proceeded on the notion that it could solve the problem of the Oehler group without a necessary and thoroughgoing political discussion with the aim of the complete clarification of the party organization.... Such a course would not and could not have clarified the political differences, would have (as was indicated at the June Plenum) alienated the Musteites, and permitted the exit of the Oehler group with about 200 followers (the support he claimed prior to the discussion in the party)."

And further, concerning the Weberite position at the June Plenum on the question of the "French turn" and the Oehler group: "Our group took one step further than Cannon. We foresaw that the party would have to concern itself with the ISSUES in dispute, that it would be necessary for it to DISCUSS the French turn, the other international questions, the issue of the Fourth International, in order to put an end to the agitation of the Oehlerites and to RENDER A DECISIVE POLITICAL DEFEAT TO THAT GROUP. While supporting the Cannon resolution, we introduced a supplementary statement (signed by Weber, Satir and Gletzer), which dealt specifically with the French turn and called for its support by the Party (more evidence of an anti-ICL position!!!). In presenting this statement we declared it our intention to begin the discussion on the political differences existing on the international questions and the aim to win the party to the support of the ICL.... We declared it necessary for the party to record itself on the disputed question and.... we declared it necessary for the party to support the ICL and the French turn, and proceeded to outline the reasons why."

In these two excerpts from Gletzer's letter, we quote seven sentences in all. Every single one of these seven sentences is a falsehood, both from the political

and the factual standpoint. We take them one by one:

1. At least nine-tenths of the political and educational discussion arranged in the party was upon our initiative -- not Gletzer's or Weber's or Muste's. In New York, where we are supposed to have put into effect the "no discussion policy", a general membership discussion meeting was held at least once a month from the inception of the party. On January 20, there was a discussion of the trade union question; one week later, January 26, a general trade union conference took place. Two weeks later, February 12, a general membership meeting took place to hear Muste report on the state of the party and to discuss the report. Two weeks after that, February 24, a general membership meeting to discuss the situation in the Soviet Union. Two weeks later, another general membership meeting was held on March 10 to discuss the Pittsburgh Plenum and Active Workers' Conference agenda. In addition, several meetings of branch functionaries (we now quote the district organizer's official report) "were held for discussion of concrete tasks before the party, special conferences of unemployed members of the party were held for discussion of party unemployed work, as well as meetings with branch organizations and with branch organizers, together with financial secretaries, etc."

At the Pittsburgh Plenum, Cannon and Shachtman proposed a series of discussion meetings in New York especially, to take up a whole series of questions really or allegedly in dispute. Such meetings were not only held but the minority of the NC was given the right to present publicly its oppositional viewpoint -- a procedure not at all normal in a democratically centralized party when it is not in a pre-convention period. On April 8, the PC brought the post-Pittsburgh Plenum discussion to a close with this motion: "We consider the general discussion of the Pittsburgh Plenum, as instructed by the Plenum, now concluded. This does not preclude further discussions on specific questions not finally decided by the Plenum." To this motion there was no objection from Oehler and Stamm or from Weber and Gould, all of whom were present! At the June Plenum, it was Cannon and Shachtman who made the proposal for inaugurating a series of discussions throughout the party, and just as, at Pittsburgh, we had made the proposal to establish an international information and discussion bulletin for our membership, in June we made the proposal for the discussion bulletin on our own internal disputes.

In New York, controlled by our group, we arranged a solid month of discussion meetings in the most democratic manner ever seen in the movement. Every group, big or small, was given exactly the same amount of time in which to present, to discuss and to summarize its point of view. Four general membership meetings were held on four Sundays running -- one on the International question, one on the SP-CP, one on the internal question, one on the district report -- at which each side gave its full presentation, and each Sunday meeting was followed by the Tuesday branch meetings at which the discussion and summary on each point took place. Each group had its documents in the hands of every single member -- official Plenum resolutions as well as caucus material by the pound, openly circulated by the Oehlerites, surreptitiously (of course!) by the Weberites. Let Satir and Gletzer, who have been running the Chicago organization for a year (right into the ground), show a discussion record that is one-tenth as substantial as this one!

2. Gletzer "saved" half of Oehler's supporters for the party so that when he pulled out, he took along only about 100. Oehler never had 200 supporters, and Gletzer knows it! He has to give this fantastic figure only in order to find some shamefaced excuse ("100 saved!") for his criminal conduct in helping keep the party in totally needless turmoil for three invaluable months, during which we convinced -- not the hopeless Oehlerites, but the Muste-Weber combination. The facts are: in the CLA, Oehler had about 40 or more supporters in New York; at the membership meeting of April 7 Oehler got 56 votes; in the New York district convention voting, Oehler got 61 votes, he took out of the party, finally, some 50 members in New York.

In Philadelphia, he took no more than he always had, as far back as the CIA and throughout the WP. Ditto in every other branch, with one or two exceptions one way or the other (in Pittsburgh, his adherents date from the Pittsburgh Plenum; in Chicago, the Weber citadel, his adherents increased in number since the June Plenum).

In other words, this sectarian faction was of such an ossified character, that, with a handful of exceptions, discussion alone could not break them up. Sometimes, as Trotsky says, you have "to yield the floor to time" -- to time, to events, to experience; at least that is what even our greatest leaders have often had to do. So you didn't win any Oehlerites? Yes, the only group in the party that won anybody from the Oehlerites, was our group (New York). And the only group in the party that Oehler won anybody from was the Weber group, and right in the bailiwick of the same Glotzer we are here refuting (Chicago, almost a third of the membership came right out of the Weber camp and into Oehler's!).

3. "Our group took one step further than Cannon." Not true! It did not even go as far as Cannon. Our international resolution for solidarity with the ICL, and the Open Letter, against the anti-Trotskyist Oehlerites, was defended by us alone in the membership. At the Sunday meetings in New York, whenever Weber could find some difference with us, he availed himself of the opportunity offered each group to present its point of view and, at the three last meetings, he slashed away at us for all he was worth. On the one question where he declared that he agreed with us and disagreed with Kiste and Oehler, on the International question, and where his "group took one step further than Cannon", Weber did not avail himself of the opportunity to speak! He was asked to do so by Smachtman, but was told that "you represent our viewpoint". Weber did not speak for our resolution in the membership meeting, and he did not even speak for his "step further". He wasn't a step ahead, but a step behind. When he could attack us, he jumped at the chance; when he could defend us, he remained silent.

4. 5. 6. 7. The statement of Weber and Co. on the "French turn" was not presented as a basis for discussion in the party so that the Oehler group could be given a "decisive political defeat" (to defeat Oehler, politically or otherwise, was the last thought in the Weberite mind!) Smachtman asked Glotzer at the June Plenum if the statement were being presented as a resolution to endorse the French turn, to be voted for or against by the Plenum. Glotzer answered NO. The minutes actually read: "Glotzer stated that on the international question he and others would submit a statement but not a resolution." Nor was the statement ever put to a vote at the Plenum! Nor was the statement ever put to a vote in the discussion that followed the Plenum! Nor did the Weberites ever put the statement forward in the branches for discussion! Nor did they ever rise in the discussion to defend it or its contents. They left the defense of the French comrades from rabid Oehlerite attacks to our supporters; they busied themselves with buttressing Oehler and Co. by their attacks on our "organizational methods".

What Glotzer says about their declarations in June that the party must take a position "for the French turn", is simply ridiculous and shows that the man doesn't know -- or else forgets -- what he votes for half the time. Because he and his faction voted for our International resolution which, with the acceptable and acceptable West amendment "#5", said: "The Workers Party is not at present obligated to take a position on the correctness of this tactic", i.e., the tactic of the French turn. The Weberites neither expected nor proposed a discussion of the "French turn". Their "statement" was handed in primarily for the purpose of "distinguishing" themselves from us, and secondarily, in an attempt to squint out of their old position on "organic unity". For that matter, neither did we show anxiety to discuss whether or not our French comrades should have entered the SFIC back in October 1934, nor because we "feared" such a discussion, but because we had no particular desire to discuss what Trotsky in a recent letter to the Belgian, Verhaegen, properly calls the

"snows of yesteryear". Such discussions are relished precisely by sectarians; for us it was sufficient to declare that the entry was a tactical step, that our comrades had conducted themselves flawlessly from a revolutionary standpoint, that it was essential for our party to collaborate with them internationally, that it was just as essential for our party to smash the Oehlerite slanderers of our French comrades. And that is precisely what our June "international resolution" did declare, and what we also adopted the West amendment.

One final word about "discussions" and "expulsions". The mealy-mouthed hypocrisy of the Weberites is all the more repellant in face of two more facts:

1) At no time, not before the Pittsburgh Plenum, at it, after it, at the June Plenum, or at any other time, did Weber, Satir, Glotzer or Gould ever make one single, solitary motion or proposal for a discussion of any question. At no time! In fact, the only proposal Glotzer ever made on his own initiative in the whole period of the party's existence was contained in a letter to the PC proposing that we send a message of greetings to the newly-formed Dutch party. The other members of the Weberite quartet on the NC did not even make a proposal as valuable as that.

2) There was one group that had an a priori expulsion policy towards Oehler and Co.; a policy of expulsion of Oehler even if he did not commit a single overt or ferreted-out covert act of indiscipline. Not our group, but Weber! As far back as October 26, 1934, before the fusion, when Oehler would not dream of violating discipline (he had no Muste to give him protection!) and when, with all his sharp differences, his collaboration in League work was active and loyal, Weber wrote a letter to Glotzer which lack of space prevents us from printing in full as an example of political depravity and unprincipled clique machinations, but from which we quote the following eloquent passages:

"Oehler plays the game of Naville. He has retreated from his outright opposition to fusion and is now engaged in trying to capitalize on the sentiment in the League directed against the NC. Even if he joins the new party -- and he may split, particularly since the arrival of a German intrigant, sent by Bauer & Co. from abroad to buttonhole comrades and instill into their minds a lot of poisonous slander in order to build a Fifth International with the SAP & the London Bureau (finally) -- he will join just as does Naville, for the purpose of causing trouble at the first opportunity and bringing about a split, which is Max' (Shachtman's) view of what we ought to do in France!... It would be better in my opinion to slough off the elements around Oehler before joining (with the AWP.-MS) and we might maneuver to force his hand." (My emphasis.-MS.)

This letter not only reveals who proposed (and when!) the expulsion of Oehler by a "maneuver", when he was guilty of nothing but a political difference of opinion; not only throws light on the fraudulent line of the Weberites in the NC, who cried that "both Oehler and Cannon" want to split, when they knew long in advance that Oehler would "cause trouble at the first opportunity and bring about a split"; but lays bare the whole revolting unprincipledness of this wretched Weber clique. We shall refer to the letter again!

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To listen to the protestations of the Weberites, for the last few months, that it is, one could only conclude that, so far as Oehlerism is concerned, they never had any political differences with us; their political evaluation of the nature and course, of the danger presented by Oehler and Co., their judgment of the Oehlerites as a reactionary, sectarian, anti-Trotskyist, basically unassimilable current, was the same as ours. Where they were superior to us, however, was in their criticism of our "organizational methods" and the putting forward of their own methods, by

which they succeeded in cutting the Oehlerite strength in half. With the air of a man repeating an analysis that has been a commonplace to all for a long time, Glotzer says in his recent letter to the IC, which was first sent out as a caucus letter and reprinted by the expelled Oehlerites before ever we saw it in the PC: "The party prior to the June Plenum had experienced a heated internal dispute with the Oehler group. The political motives behind this dispute lay in Oehler's persistent opposition to the French turn, and its international aspects. His group endeavored, in spite of the fact that the party had only just become organized and had not entered into a discussion period, to organize the party against the views of LD, the ICL and the French organization."

What is true is true; what is indisputable is indisputable. And you would think, from the offhand manner in which Glotzer writes this, that he not only always had this opinion, but that he acted accordingly. If this was the analysis of Oehler that Glotzer's group always had, then they must have estimated him as we all estimated his international associates, Bauer & Co.: as a sterile, reactionary current, specializing in anti-Trotskyism, and working, by the very logic of their whole political line, to split the genuine movement for the Fourth International, and consequently representing the acutest danger to our movement. But the whole trouble with the Weberite line was that, although this is how they write at the end of the year 1935, they had an opposite, and consequently, a false estimate for the whole first part of the year, i.e., during the time it was necessary to fight the Oehlerite menace inside the party, not to philosophize about it after they were on the outside.

Our indictment of the Weberites includes this count: Their differences with us over Oehlerism did not lie in objections to our "organizational methods" but in an opposite political judgment of the Oehlerites. In other words, they had political differences with us as to Oehlerism, differences which caused them to shield the Oehlerites from our blows, differences which they cravenly hid under their abusive philippics against our "organizational methods". In this whole situation is contained an important lesson. The Weberite argumentation and method are not new; but age has not given them standing in our movement. We have met them before and we were taught by the Marxist leaders how to deal with them; that is why we were and are so intransigent against these politicians.

In a letter written on May 5, 1931, directed against the unprincipled Austrian cliquists like Frey and Landau, Comrade Trotsky said:

"F., L., and to a high degree N., are creating a new political legitimization for themselves of exceptional profundity. In politics, they are in agreement with Trotsky, but his organizational methods are false (as we see, even the words of the Weberite music are old -MS). Not one of them has up to now taken the trouble to put down on paper, clearly and plainly, just what he actually means by 'organizational methods'. The people named, as well as many others, always begin to complain about organizational methods just at the moment when it proves to be necessary to subject them to political criticism... Frey broke with us because he is no revolutionary internationalist. But he hides behind an organizational comma because it is not to his advantage to explain the essence of his break with us... Completely aping his precursor Frey, Landau complains about organizational methods... He cannot (that is, he does not yet need to, today) manufacture principled disagreements with the Russian Opposition, as he tried to manufacture disagreements with Leipzig on the Russian question. What remains for him? An organizational 'comma'. The unprincipled and therefore indistinguishable attempt of Landau to unite with the Prometheus-group against the Russian Opposition, most wretchedly discredits him. The Prometheus-group is an ideological, serious and in its way very principled group and in this respect represents the complete opposition of Landau. This group has never declared its solidarity with the Russian Opposition. Precisely

during the last year it has been shown that the disagreements between this group and us are not only very great, but are systematically growing... Now what does Landau do? He attempts to conclude a bloc with the Bordigists against the fundamental kernel of the International Opposition. Perhaps because he agrees with the Bordigists in the question of democracy? Oh, no, that isn't what Landau's thinking about. He is concerned with the purification of Trotsky's organizational methods and therefore needs allies. The whole thing is explainable by the 'organizational' requirements of Landau. To be sure, Landau says: 'We have serious differences with the Bordigists, but....' etc., etc. But after all that's the song of all the opportunists and adventurers: 'Disagreements should not prevent joint work.' It would be good to ask one of these sages to explain the reciprocal relationships between politics and organization, upon the counterposing of which all of them, under Frey's leadership, build their own 'politics' and their own 'organization'. Nobody wrote with such grandiloquent pathos about the 'organizing of the October revolution' and the 'organizing of the Red Army' as did Landau. It would be interesting to ask him, how he conceives of organization in this case. As pure politics, or as organizational technique free of politics, or as such a union of the two in which organization represents the means of politics? The counterposing which Landau undertakes results from this, that for him, as clique-leader, organizational methods have a completely independent, yes, arbitrary character. To whisper something to one, to trip up someone else, to set intrigues afoot against a third, to wheedle his way into the graces of a group of insufficiently critical workers, to tickle their prejudices -- these organizational methods have nothing in common with politics, at least not with Marxian politics. Yet the task lies precisely in purging our ranks of these poisonous and decomposing methods."

If these words are not a photograph of Weberism, they are at least a pretty faithful sketch! Now let us see what political position was hidden behind the "organizational comma" of Cannon and Shachtman which was the "only thing" the Weberites objected to. Remember that our political analysis of the Oehlerites, from the very beginning, was that they represented a factional, sectarian tendency, reactionary and sterile. In the WP, we made this statement as early as the Pittsburgh Plenum, and in more amplified form ever since.

And the Weberites? In his statement to the Pittsburgh Plenum on why he would not vote for the motion designating the Oehlerites as sectarian and the main danger to the party, Satir wrote:

"I cannot, however, agree with that section of the motion which flows out of Comrade Cannon's and Shachtman's speeches and which characterize Comrade Oehler and his co-thinkers as full-blown and hardened sectarians -- especially so since the criterion here seems to be Oehler's insistence on committing the party to a position on this or that political question.... I particularly disagree with the argument that the main danger at this time is from the direction of Oehler.... In the previous sessions of the NC it was not established that Oehler's position is fundamentally different than that of the NC. For that reason the branding of Oehler as an arch-sectarian and the concentration of all the fire against his line is obviously uncalled for."

Glotzer handed in a similar statement! Gould, in his statement, wrote:

"In agreement with that section of the (NC) resolution which condemns the factional attitude of Oehler and his followers. I do not subscribe (for similar reasons given in the statement of Glotzer and Satir) with the section of the NC resolution which characterizes Oehler as having a sectarian position."

Even a month later, on April 7, 1935, Weber, in a statement on the results of

the Pittsburgh Plenum, wrote: "We consider as unwarranted and premature the attempt to condemn the Oehler group as a hard and fast sectarian faction, since no major differences between this grouping and the NC have been presented to clinch any argument arising in connection with such condemnation. We are unwilling to load ourselves to an undue sharpening of differences but prefer to alleviate the situation. We are unwilling to label and condemn this grouping since this may help lay the basis for future organizational measures."

Now, regardless of whether or not we had presented sufficiently "clinching arguments" to prove our charge of sectarianism, the fact is that all the Weberites know, or should have known, from the CLA onward, that the Oehlerites did represent a thoroughly sectarian line; that if it had not yet manifested itself in the WP in the form of their "French turn" position, then it had appeared quite clearly in the Oehlerite attempt to disrupt the fusion. But the factional interests of the Weberites carried the day; as always, they drew their political line from their organizational (factional) requirements. They saw the prospect of a fight against Cannon, with the Oehlerites as a useful counterbalance (and who knows? perhaps also an ally in another bloc?), and that is why they refused to characterize Oehler politically as he should have been! They wouldn't accept our characterization, and put forward none of their own. At the April 7, 1935, New York post-Pittsburgh membership meeting, the majority of those present voted for the NC motion; the Oehlerites voted for their own oppositional motion; all the Weberites (Weber, Gould, Abern, Sterling, Ray, Weaver, Milton, Engel) abstained demonstratively in bloc, without presenting a resolution of their own (a typical piece of Weberite cowardice)!

At no time did we receive a single ounce of support from the Weberites in the fight against Oehlerism, until, after the October Plenum, when the Oehlerites walked out of the party, the Weberites joined with us to record the fact and formally expel them. At no time did the Weberites take the initiative in the struggle against Oehlerism. If they did intervene, it was for the purpose of sabotaging the fight, of protecting and shielding this reactionary clique of neo-Weberites, of protesting against calling the Oehlerites "sectarian", protesting the expulsion of Zack, protesting the expulsion of Oehler, denying that there were serious differences in the party -- in other words, acting the role of shield-bearers for the Oehlerites.

When Zack was expelled, the first reaction of the Weberites was to attack the...PC. On May 24, Satir and Glotzer, prompted by Oehler who was in Chicago, telegraphed the PC their "alarm" over the Zack expulsion and the charges against Stamm and Basky. Under their leadership, the Chicago branch adopted a protest against the PC. Did these two statesmen bother to inquire first of the PC for its reasons for expelling Zack, for the circumstances surrounding the case? Not for a minute! Did these two NC members, in face of repeated PC regulations, defend the PC before the Chicago membership, as was their elementary duty, or at least advise the membership to wait until the PC had an opportunity to present its information and position? Not for a minute! Oehler's word was good enough for them to act upon; besides, here was another chance to get in a blow against Cannon. The Berkeley branch, controlled by the Weberites, voted, according to the PC records of June 10, that it is "irrevocably (!) opposed to the expulsion of Zack and demand his reinstatement". Another Weberite branch, Akron, decided in favor of "protesting against Cannon's attack on Zack at open forum" and "requesting NC to reconsider its actions on the Zack expulsion".

That is how the Weberites fought our "organizational methods": always by giving aid and comfort to the Oehlerites every time they should have given them blows, or else been polite enough to get out of our way so that we might deliver them ourselves. When the Oehlerites complained about our "organizational methods", we understood what they were talking about. Thus, in his PC statement of August 3,

1935, Stamm wrote that our "policy of factionally monopolizing the press is precisely the policy used by the capitulators of Charleroi against the comrades who opposed them. It is characteristic of the brutal, bureaucratic methods employed throughout the ICL by those who support and apply the new orientation." The Oehlerites were fighting against the line and the methods of the ICL and Comrade Trotsky; consequently, they fought our line and methods, which were indistinguishable from the ICL's. But the Weberites? They fished in troubled waters....

At the June Plenum, and after, the Weberites developed a new political line: The Oehlerites are a danger; the Cannonites are just as much a danger. We will fight both of them with the same vigor because they both stand on the same plane -- they both want split. "The speech of Comrade Cannon," said Glotzer-Satir in their Plenum statement, "indicates to us his desire for such a split, and the statement introduced by the Cannon group is a further confirmation of this. Likewise, the speeches and threats of the Oehler group also (!) drive unmistakably to a split." (It is true that in this statement, Glotzer and Satir advanced as compared with Pittsburgh; they actually labelled the Oehlerites "sectarians". Dear, dear! But then, they advanced also with regard to us; they labelled the fighters against the anti-Trotskyist crew as "splitters", (and to show their complete objectivity, they labelled the anti-Trotskyists the same way).

More than a month later, Gould declared at a New York membership meeting (speech of July 27, sent out as caucus document): "The present party condition is a product of the methods and attitudes of the two groups (the Cannonites and the Oehlerites) both of whom had pursued these methods in the CLA and who entered the party with skepticism...Both set to work to liquidate the other. The fight, the factionalism, the animosity that now threatens the existence of the party, is the product of the conscious workings of these two caucuses...Our group stands today firm against the false line of Oehler, stands today against the false line of Cannon. We stand opposed to their methods. We stand opposed to their line....We will fight until we defeat both of you politically and we promise to accomplish this aim." Not badly put, eh? and certainly not timidly put; but like most Weberite promises, not worth the paper it's written on.

And the fourth sermon-monger of the Weberites, Weber himself, wrote in his post-June plenum statement on the SP-CP question (also sent out as a caucus document): "The orientation of building up the party should mean first of all the consolidation of all our forces internally; which means establishing peace. There is every political basis for this despite the embittered feelings that are all that is left in the way of peace."

Not political, irreconcilable political differences, stand in the way of "peace", explained our own Father Divine, but only "embittered feelings"! We said: consolidate the loyal party forces by uniting in a fight against the main danger to the party and the international movement, Oehlerism. That was our political line. The Weberite line was: Oehler's line and methods aren't so good; Cannon's line and methods are just as bad; we will fight them both in the same way and on the same plane; meantime, boys, don't feel bitter about it -- let there be peace on earth and good-will to all men.

In actuality, of course, they didn't even follow this line. Nine-tenths of their attacks -- and this holds true also of Muste -- were directed at us. They collaborated with Muste and Oehler, but not with us (for example, the Musteite proposals for "solving" the internal situation at the June plenum were drawn up after joint consultation with Oehler and Weber, but not with us; they were voted for by Muste-Oehler-Weber, who all voted against us). Read, for example, Gould's speech on July 27: one paragraph or two against Oehler; the balance of the speech against Cannon and Shachtman. Read, for example, Weber's statement on the SP-CP: one paragraph of criticism of the Oehler position; one paragraph of criticism of

the Muste position; the entire balance directed at us. Recall, for example, the four post-June New York membership meetings: on the international question, where Weber agreed with us, and opposed Oehler and Muste, he did not take the floor for us and against them; where he disagreed, he or Gould took the floor three times to deliver the bulk of their speeches against us.

These are the reasons why we fought the Weber political line on the internal situation with such vigor, as well as the methods they used in pursuing this line. Let us assume for a moment that in the fight against the reactionary Schlerites, we displayed such an intense anxiety to protect the party from their pernicious influence, that we sometimes went beyond the limits of the situation, the limits of the development of the party members' (and leaders') clarity about the situation, and that we therefore proposed correct steps prematurely. We are even ready to discuss, honestly and objectively, this assumption, to the extent that it is worth discussing at this date. But even in such a case, the duty of the wiser Weberites would have been to call attention merely to our over-anxiety to shield the party, to say to us: We agree entirely with your estimate of this danger; but before acting as you propose, it is necessary to convince the comrades who are not yet sure of your proposals; what is more, we will join with you and side by side, unitedly, we will win the overwhelming majority of the party to our view, isolate the Oehlerite danger and smash it. But instead of saying this, the Weberites said: Oehler? Cannon? Same thing!

How did Trotsky judge the situation? In his letter to our party on August 12 (in Muste's article for the January 16, 1935 Internal Bulletin, he quotes a couple of sentences from this letter, but omits the decisive sentences which precede and follow his quotation. By comparison, the reader will see that Muste has another distressing habit: of beginning and ending quotations only at those points where they are least -- how shall we say? -- inconvenient and embarrassing to him), Trotsky wrote:

"Comrade Weber and Glotzer accuse the Cannon group of proceeding too rudely and bureaucratically against Oehler. I cannot express an opinion on this charge since I have not had the opportunity to follow the development of the struggle. Hypothetically (this emphasis is Trotsky's; all the rest are mine.-MS), I can accept the possibility of a certain hastiness on the part of the leading comrades. It would naturally be a mistake to desire to liquidate organizationally an opposition group before the overwhelming majority of the party has had the chance to understand to the full the inconsistency and sterility of that group. Leaders are often impatient in seeking to remove an obstacle in the path of the party's activity. In such cases, the party can and must correct the precipitateness of the leaders, since it is not only the leaders who educate the party but the party as well which educates the leaders. Herein lies the salutary dialectic of democratic centralism.

"But Comrades Weber and Glotzer are decidedly wrong when they place on the same plane the 'mistakes' of Oehler and the 'mistakes' of Cannon. Sectarianism is a cancer which threatens the activity of the Workers Party, which paralyzes it, poisons discussions and prevents courageous steps forward in the life of the workers' organizations. I should like to hope that a surgical operation will not be necessary -- but precisely in order to avoid expulsions, it is necessary to strike pitilessly at the Oehler group by a decision of an overwhelming majority. This is the preliminary condition of all possible future successes for the W.P. We all desire that it remain independent, but before all and above all, independent of the cancer which is eating at its vitals."

(Muste omits from his quotation the first 3 sentences; prints the next one; omits the fifth sentence; prints the sixth and seventh; and omits the balance. A most fascinating quoter is Muste!)

To paraphrase Trotsky, the Weberites (and the Kusteites who kept begging Oehler to join with them in a "loyal struggle" against "Cannon's methods") are politically incapable of distinguishing between a broom and the obstacle which it sweeps aside; at best, all they can see is a cloud of dust. The Weberites are politically incapable of distinguishing between a surgeon and a cancer he is operating on; all they hear is somebody crying out and blood flowing -- whereupon they curse both surgeon and cancer and call for peace and bandages. In politics, this inability to distinguish is a fatal disqualification; when this inability is manifested, not by honest but confused militants, but by presumably politically mature persons who render themselves blind by letting personal antipathies and clique interests determine their course, it is criminal.

What, it will be asked, are the considerations that actuate the Weber clique, which, politically speaking, isn't worth a nickel? The answer to that is contained in an exposition based as before on documents, of the origin of the Weber faction which, if not entertaining, is at least instructive.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WEBER GROUP

The origin of the Weber group, like its political position in general, is shrouded in that obscurity and mystification which are characteristic of cliques that operate in the dark, shamefacedly, without banner unfurled, without candidness, without principled platform. Of the five recorded official statements on the origin of the faction made by various representatives of it -- five recorded statements are all I have been able to gather to date -- not one of them jibes with the other. And that, as we shall see, is not hard to understand, because all of them are untrue.

The minutes of the CLA convention read, after recording the statements of Oehler and Cannon announcing the dissolution of their respective factions, as follows: "Weber announced that he had no caucus prior to the convention; dissolves the Weber caucus and pledges loyal collaboration with other members of the new party." Statement I, therefore, is that while the faction was, by divine power of attraction of similars, constituted right at the convention, none had existed up to that time.

The same minutes record the following indignant statement made by the other Weberite delegate from New York, the noted activist and statesman, Sterling: "I wish to protest vigorously the statement of Shachtman that I was or am (!) in any kind of a faction with Comrade Weber ever since the breakup of the so-called Shachtman faction. I consider that this statement of Shachtman is maliciously intended to create the impression that such a faction did exist for the purpose of an unprincipled struggle against the WC." Statement II, therefore, is that, contrary to Weber's assertion, there was no Weber faction even at the CLA convention. Sterling denied that he either "was or am" in one, or that it ever existed.

In his November 20, 1935, letter to the IS of the ICL, Glotzer explained: "The Cannon letter declared falsely that the Weber group formed a sort of opposition to the fusion. The Weber group constituted itself only immediately before the CLA convention (November 1934) and at the convention." Statement III, therefore, is that the faction, contrary to both Weber and the vigorously protestant Sterling, did exist and was organized (on what platform? Stupid question!) before the CLA convention.

In his letter to the IS, dated December 29, 1935, Weber writes that "we" felt "that it had become necessary after March to open up the discussion on the French turn so as to bring about ideological clarification. There was everything to gain by achieving political understanding first, and everything to lose by resorting only to organizational measures. This position we made perfectly clear in a state-

ment to the New York district after the March Plenum". Statement IV, therefore, is that in the WP, the Weber faction was formed only after the March Plenum (Pittsburgh) when "we" had a "position" which "we made perfectly clear".

But in his speech to the New York Party membership on July 27, 1935, later sent out as a caucus document, Gould, in his untterrified bid for leadership, declared: "We, and we alone, are the only group that can come before the party at this juncture and honestly place before the membership for examination the history of the work, the attitude and the work of the Weber group: as the group that foresaw (!) and exposed (!!) the trickery of Cannon at the Pittsburgh Plenum." To foresee, one must exist before the event foreseen. Statement V, therefore, is that the Weber group not only existed, but also foresaw things and exposed them before the March Plenum.

Now, as previously indicated, none of these statements on the origin of the Weber faction corresponds to the truth. The fact is that it was established under the auspices of Weber and Abern (the same Abern whom this same Weber once proposed to Shachtman to run out of the movement because he was a menace to it! and to run him out for anything but political reasons...) almost exactly two years ago -- established essentially by dis-nothing grumblers, impotent malcontents, retired tent-sulkors and the like, and based upon gnawing personal antipathies and anticipated but non-existing differences of opinion.

The CLA was essentially a propaganda group which, for a whole series of historical circumstances chiefly beyond its control, had to suffer all the maladies of a circle, a sect. All its progressive features combined -- and they were many -- were not strong enough to eliminate entirely these maladies, brought on basically by its enforced isolation from the health-giving flow of the broad class struggle. Just as it would be philistinism to ignore the great contributions to the revolutionary movement which even this small propaganda group was able to make and did make, so it would be gross sentimentalism and misplaced patriotism to ignore the negative aspects of its existence. Among these negative aspects are tendencies to routine conservatism; to personal frictions which become exaggerated beyond all proportion to their real importance; to yielding to isolation and to become ingrown and contented with things as they are; to bitterness with your isolation becoming transformed into finding fault with this or that comrade, this or that group for objective difficulties basically beyond anyone's control; to a dozen and one other of the evils attendant upon the life of a propaganda group.

In the course of the early years of the CLA (1932-1933), these negative aspects of the League's life were manifested in an increasingly violent struggle in the leadership and the ranks which divided them into two groups, the Cannon and Shachtman factions. It would lead us too far afield to go into the details of this internal struggle. Nor is it necessary, if only because of the facts that it has long ago been outlived and effectively liquidated and that it had no basis in political or principle differences. It appeared to revolve around accusations of organizational abuses on the one side and similar delinquencies on the other, for both sides repeatedly stressed the absence of serious political differences as the basis of the fight. What is necessary, is that a political explanation be given of why the fight took place, what was its nature, and how it was and why it had to be settled. The Weber group today lives essentially on poisoned reminiscences of that obsolete struggle; it still circulates the faction accusations of Shachtman against Cannon and vice-versa as the material with which it "educates" its supporters. It tears situations and arguments right out of their context and in a thoroughly absurd -- not to say criminal -- manner applies them to present-day situations which have no kinship with those of the past. The clearest summary of what the CLA internal dispute was, at bottom, was made in a letter to the International Secretariat written by Comrade Trotsky on March 7, 1933. We quote a lengthy excerpt from it because it is not only a political explanation of the League's internecine strife

but because it will help to lay bare the falsity of the whole Weber faction's foundation.

"For several years the action of the League bore mainly a literary propagandist character. The number of members vacillated around the same figure, varying according to the improvement or worsening of the work at the center. The absence of progress in the movement, as has always been the case, aroused all sorts of personal antagonisms. The same absence of progress in the movement does not permit these antagonisms to take on a political character. This has given, and still gives to the struggle an excessively poisoned character in the absence of a principled content clear for everybody. Members of the organization do not learn anything from such a struggle. They are forced to group themselves according to personal attachments, sympathies and antipathies. The struggle of the groups becomes, in its turn, an obstacle to the further progress of the movement....

"It is quite possible that in this struggle there are contained plausible principled differences in embryonic form. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that the two groups anticipate too much and sharpen the organizational struggle between the groups and persons altogether out of proportion with the development of the political work and of the questions raised by the latter... A genuine solution of the internal difficulties can only be found along the path of expanding the mass work... Of course, it is theoretically possible that with the transition to broader work, the potential differences can assume an open and active political character. But up to the present, this has not at all been expressed in anything. More or less full-fashioned, serious and firm differences have not been revealed in any of the three fields of work mentioned above. There remains another explanation: the aggravation of the crisis has been called forth by the mechanics themselves of the transition from one stage of work to another. This does not exclude the birth of serious differences in the future, but these do not necessarily have to correspond with the line-up of the present groupings... It is quite possible that the leadership, after some regroupments, will be constituted from elements of both the present groups... Given the absence or, at least, the non-obviousness of the principled basis in the struggle of the groups, conciliationism is quite justified and progressive in the internal life. It is necessary, now, at the present stage, to support this tendency with all the authority of the international organization."

The point of view contained in this letter finally met with the agreement of the representatives of both factions who visited Trotsky to discuss our internal situation (Swabeck and Shachtman) and finally embodied in the resolution on the American situation adopted by the 1933 Plenum of the ICL, which further proposed that "the factional organizations should be dissolved". Both representatives pledged themselves to carry this resolution into effect to the full extent of their powers, and to win their partisans to its support. There are no clear political differences; conciliationism is healthy and justified; dissolve the factions; plunge into mass work; if there are latent political differences they will show themselves when they emerge as political reactions to problems of the class struggle; but they need not necessarily manifest themselves organizationally in the old factional line-up -- a new one may appear. This was the line which both the old factions -- Cannon, Shachtman, Swabeck, Gletzer, Cehler, Aborn, Stern, Weber -- formally declared to correspond to the realities of the situation, formally declared themselves ready to support.

Yet, "the mechanics themselves of the transition from one stage to another", provoked a sharpening of the situation for a time. Instead of the situation being improved, the League reached a point where it was threatened with a split. In a letter to Shachtman, Trotsky wrote on March 8, 1934; "You are marching towards a split there and that would mean the catastrophe for the League. It is actually all the same, regardless of what side is more in the wrong, for both sides will be

in no position to explain to the workers what caused the split. And that will completely compromise both groups. In one of your letters you gave expression to the hope that the next conference would settle the disputes. This is by no means my opinion. If your group gets 51%, it would change nothing in the matter...."

And, referring to this letter, Trotsky wrote Glotzer on March 14, 1934: "I can only give you the same counsel: In no case and under no circumstances to sharpen the situation in the League. The IS, I hope, will intervene in a few days in the American question. Any impatience on the part of your group would bring closer a split. And a split without political physiognomy is the most dangerous miscarriage, which may inflict death upon the mother as well as upon the child. Also the hope for an early national conference could, under the given conditions, call forth only an insignificant shifting of the relationship of forces. Whether your group has 5 representatives in the National Committee and the others 4, or the reverse, remains pretty insignificant, since the one group is dependent upon the other if one is not to drive to a split, that is, to a catastrophe. No impatience, dear Glotzer. You must prepare yourself for long work. You will say to me: 'And the others, the Cannon group?' Naturally, it goes for both groups at the same time."

Precisely in order to prevent the split "without political physiognomy", in order to ameliorate the League situation, to make possible collaboration, to facilitate the turn to mass work, Shachtman had proposed to his friends the liquidation of the group. And for a time, it was, in effect liquidated. (The same proposition was made by Cannon in his group where, interestingly and significantly enough, resistance was offered to dissolution primarily by Stamm and Oehler). Led by Weber and Abern, however, a number of comrades, still agitated by reminiscences of yesterday's sharp antagonisms, demanded the reconstitution of the faction -- a direct violation, it goes without saying, of the formal pledge made to dissolve the groups -- and, at a meeting where Shachtman was present, he was lustily indicted for having let the faction go to pieces. Shachtman pointed out that a group can exist under then obtaining circumstances, only if it has a distinct platform of its own and is ready to fight in the organization for leadership as against another group.

But not only did we not have a distinct platform of our own, but, with all the denunciations of the "Cannon regime", nobody in the group was prepared to "take over leadership". Spector had retired again to Canada; Glotzer had found the responsibilities of leadership at the center a bit onerous and had retired to Chicago, from behind which he kept up a systematic criticism of the Resident Committee for its "lack of functioning"; Abern had retired from all leading activity and refused to undertake any work, either under instructions from the League or from the faction. Of the more or less leading comrades, only Shachtman and Lewit were carrying on any responsible activity in the center.

In order to achieve the dissolution of the group in an indirect way -- by demonstrating the baselessness of it, its futility, its pretentiousness -- Shachtman cut the ground from under the Abernites who were insisting on the perpetuation of the faction by proposing that only those can be members of the group who are subject to its discipline and ready to do work for the League which the group would decide they must do. Abern voted against this motion, thereby placing himself outside the group. The minutes of our January 13, 1934 meeting read: "Group to meet Sunday, January 20, at 10 A.M. Letter from Marty (Abern) to be read.... Settle group once for all." At the January 20 meeting, it was settled, "once for all". It was the last meeting of the "Shachtman group". But it is from that time that dates the birth of the Weber-Abern caucus!

The decisive reason why neither the Cannon nor the Shachtman groups could ever be reconstituted on the old basis, lay in the fact that in the course of the year 1934, the progressive forces in both groups found a common political basis,

which not only broke down the old lines effectively and made a reality of Trotsky's prediction that "the leadership, after some regroupments, will be constituted from elements of both the present groups" -- but which facilitated the great advances made by the League in practical work and wiped out for good the impending danger of a split. Cannon and Shachtman worked out jointly, and in complete harmony, the whole line and perspective of the fusion with the AWP, and together carried the burden of the work of effecting the fusion and defending it in the membership. Cannon and Shachtman achieved a complete harmony of view with regard to the essential "international" question facing the League that year -- the so-called French turn and its endorsement by the CLA. Cannon and Shachtman achieved a complete unity of view and conduct in the course of the famous Minneapolis strike, which was the high-watermark of the League's activities.

In the face of this political and working solidarity, it would have been criminal -- and worse: stupid -- for Cannon to have based his attitude towards Shachtman on what he had said about him a year or two before, or for Shachtman's attitude towards Cannon to retain the same old basis. Kentucky feuds are fought that way -- unto the seventh generation. Gang fights are conducted on the same principle ("I'll get him for what he did to me if I have to wait ten years"). Bolsheviks detest feudism and gangsterism in politics. They base their collaboration on political agreement, regardless of whom they agree with; they base their antipathies on political disagreement, regardless of whom they disagree with. No more violent philippics can be imagined than those hurled back and forth between Lenin and Trotsky for 14 long and feverishly polemical years. Yet, the moment they met in the Russia of 1917 and discovered that they had arrived at political agreement, they reestablished the firmest and most durable political and organizational collaboration seen since the days of Marx and Engels. Don't imagine for a moment that they weren't Russian Weberites in those days who were discomfited by this resumed solidarity and who insinuatingly whispered the old stories about what Lenin once said about Trotsky and what Trotsky once said about Lenin. But during Lenin's lifetime, these feudists never dared raise their voices above a whisper; else they would have received the answer they deserved and which Lenin was quite capable of giving in his own crushing way. They had to wait for Lenin to die before their type of politics could be shouted in public and finally be made to prevail in the Soviet Union.

Now, we need no muttonhead to remind us that neither Cannon nor Shachtman is a Lenin or Trotsky. What is important is the essence of the comparison. At least between Lenin and Trotsky there had been serious, deep political differences before 1917; between Cannon and Shachtman there had been only organizational differences, and of a minor temporary character at that. The fact that they were able to collaborate organizationally after having found such indisputable political agreement on every important question facing the CLA, should have been welcomed by every serious League member, not only because it made possible a liquidation of the bad state of affairs in the organization and a leap forward in its work, but because it showed that the responsible leaders of the League did not act in their disputes like Kentucky feudists or Chicago gangsters. The Weberites did not welcome it, however; and they translated their dissatisfaction with the ending of the old war they had enjoyed so much into the formation of a clique that would continue circulating the old caucus documents and fighting the old battles, regardless of the fact that, as the months went by and new problems arose to be solved, the membership, especially the new comrades, came to know less about the origin and nature of the old disputes and -- properly enough -- cared less. They were like the aged imperial warrior in Dryden's "Alexander's Feast":

"Soothed with the sound, the king grew vain;
"Fought all his battles o'er again;
"And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice
he slew the slain."

They were -- and though there is nothing either imperial or warrior-like about them, they still are.

You will ask: what was the political platform of the Weber group which distinguished it from other groups or tendencies and thereby warranted the formation of a faction? It had no political platform.

You will ask: what political differences did it have at that time with the IJ? It had no political differences, but it hoped they would develop.

You will ask: What political differences did develop in the last year of the IJ's existence to justify their anticipations? None really developed, for, as pointed out previously in this document, the Weberites found that on the main line of the main questions facing the League that crucial year, they were in avowed agreement with Cannon and Shachtman.

You will ask: Can this be called a political group contributing anything positive and healthful to the movement? No, it can only be called by its right name: an unprincipled clique without a platform of its own, skulking in the dark, operating surreptitiously, envenoming the party with its letters containing accusations which they dare not make in the party publicly, seeking to undermine by any means at its disposal those comrades upon whom they insist the responsibility of leadership must fall, lying in wait for an opportunity to pounce upon those who take responsibility and discharge it by allying or blocing up with anybody who, for whatever reason, is also opposed to this leadership.

What a perfect portrait Weber draws of himself and his faction in his revolting letter to Glotzer on October 26, 1934! "Papcun came to New York intending to get together all the 'honest' elements for a discussion. He proposed that I sit in the same room with Oehler for a serious discussion. Valuing Papcun I stated my willingness for undertaking such an impossible discussion, although I told him plainly that no group could be formed on any such notion as 'honesty'. (It wouldn't be bad as one of the ingredients, however! - MS). Oehler refused to discuss and Papcun has now become convinced that one has to work with a homogeneous group. I think I brought him over to my view on the French question and he is willing to start a group more or less in accord on ideas. Marty -- possibly in view of the Daily Worker matter -- was scared off even from discussion. But I am now convinced that a new group is necessary. I believe we can start with the French question as a club and prevent the Oehlers from falsely corraling the sentiment of the League against the NC majority and its methods of doing business."

What good tidings to bear to the countryside! After waiting for almost a year, Weber had found an issue on which to fight the NC, on which to recruit members for his woebegone secret caucus. "We can start with the French question as a club" -- there is a sentence that should go down as a classic of political abomination! And what "French question" would serve as "the club"? "Organic unity"! Shachtman and Swaback had come out against it; and, said Weber, Trotsky had come out for it in a recent article ("at least, so I think", said Weber about an article signed "Linier" which was a pseudonym selected by Melinier by dropping the first two letters of his name!). Now, thinks Weber, we'll also come out for "organic unity"; Shachtman and Cannon will oppose it; we'll have Trotsky on our side. We'll have our yearner-for issue, we'll have a club, and -- praise Allah! -- our chance at last to smash the "regime".

"I am still chuckling and smacking my lips, some would say of me that I am licking my chops, over your letter to the inestimable Max," Weber writes glosfully. "You scored him at every turn and on every point, showing a new skill with that rapier, the pen. (This is what is known as the art of chocking a cat with butter! - MS.)...There is a logic of action when once one takes a certain road that drives

willy-nilly, straight towards the end of that road. It is only the great mind — greater than Max possesses — that knows how to change a false course in time. Starting by 'suppressing' effectively through the gentle art of delay, the documents of an Abern, a Gletzer and a Weber in a discussion, the Shachtmans may end by beginning to suppress the documents of a Trotsky. And that has already happened! The NC has voted against printing in the Militant an excellent article by 'Cruz' (the old man) printed in Unser Wort because it is 'wrong' from the NC standpoint on organic unity. Of course they offer to mimeograph it for the members — but we can place no trust in them at all. And the Old Man did not take the steps he did in France without the clearest kind of warning that this is a matter on which he will break with who disagree. Are the Shachtmans and Swabacks ready to break? Obviously not and hence the greater their demolition of the position of organic unity*, the greater will be the abjectness of their capitulation when the proper time comes — if they do not pursue the course too far on which they are now headed...."

This letter sums up the character of the whole Weber caucus and the basic point wherein it differs from us: Our "organizational methods" flow directly, logically, conformably from our political line, from which they are inseparable. With Weber, however, his political line flows directly from his "organizational requirements", that is, from his unprincipled platformless, factional antipathy towards us. The difference is that which exists between a Marxian group and a reactionary clique. Hating us intensely on the basis of old, half-forgotten disputes, Weber formed his clique, lay in wait for months looking for a "club" and then finally, "smacking his lips", he discovered or manufactured one. But does this mean that Weber was ready to take over the responsibilities then borne by those whom he was going to "club" out of leadership? Not for a moment, for with all its disadvantages, life is too comfortable as it is, and surreptitious sniping is far easier than carrying on the work at the center. Let us read a little more from this revealing-revolting letter:

"Finally, let us ask, why are our 'leaders' opposed to having the Stalinists enter into an organic unity with our own forces and the SP in France? Evidently because they were thinking not so much of France of which they knew so little as of America. And here they would probably take a similar stand under similar conditions (which are not in sight yet). They are opposed under all conditions! Hence there is no point in looking elsewhere than right here for the reasons. One must conclude that the answer lies in — careerism. Evidently joining the SP or any other party after it has become centrist (and even this they ignore) involves the possibility of gaining leadership or at least important posts. And we don't want too many competitors, especially when backed by a large following. One cannot explain their stand otherwise...."

*The "organic unity" position we were going to capitulate to, is detailed by Weber further along in the letter; it is simply too unique to let go unquoted. "In France, one way or another, we must bring about the formation of Soviets.... In a sense, and certainly in the sense in which all groupings can agitate freely for the adoption of their point of view, the Soviet may be called an 'organic unity'. The question is: would not the formation of Soviets, which do not fall from heaven, be greatly facilitated by the formation of a single, united party with its roots reaching into the remotest corner of France and involving all sections of the masses? In fact one could say that the 'organic unity' would itself bring about the All-national Soviet which would in turn help to spread the Soviets everywhere. Fanciful? Not a bit. It is not even fanciful to say — as I do — that to oppose organic unity is to oppose a strong weapon that can be utilized for the creation of Soviets — to oppose organic unity is to oppose the Soviets!" This is not merely enough, as Stalin would say, to make a cat laugh; or even a horse. It is our contention that it is enough to make the stone image of the Sphinx laugh. An impossibility, you say? or as Weber would say, the Sphinx would not laugh at all."

It is only with the greatest restraint that we refrain from characterizing in the only way he can be characterized, the comfortably placed author of the above lines who, though a tractor could not draw him into the not over-lucrative post of a party worker, writes so intimately and expertly about careerists hunting for posts. What is politically important -- and those are the things we want to concern ourselves with in this document -- is the fact that Weber and his caucus, who qualified a certain group of comrades as careerists (in the cowardly safety of a confidential open letter which was circulated throughout his faction's ranks), nevertheless insisted that these same careerists should have the majority of the leadership of the organization to which he belonged -- insisted on it at the CLA convention held a bare five weeks after this letter was written. A revolutionist does not propose to give the leadership of the movement to careerists, who are its worst enemies; it is better to give the leadership to the youngest and most inexperienced militant in the ranks. Instead of leadership, he should give them a fight to drive the careerists out of the movement, or else stand doubly condemned as an irresponsible scoundrel who knows better but holds his tongue.

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To the extent that the Weber group has support in the party, it has not gained a single partisan by the methods of open, honest ideological confrontation of its opponents. Its methods are different: it says one thing in letters, in poisonous "information notes" sent out secretly by Abern but which they would never dare put before the party publicly, and says another thing openly. When Satir declares in his statement to the Pittsburgh Plenum that "factionalism is unwarranted at this point and can only impede the party's growth. All factionalism must therefore be checked" -- he neglects to add to this pious declaration that there is a Weber faction operating clandestinely, hiding in the bushes and preparing against the day when it can find another "club". When Weber declares in his statement on April 7, 1935 that "it is our duty at this time to prevent any exaggeration of differences to the point where encouragement is given to the building of hard and fast groupings" -- he neglects to add to this piece of hypocrisy and sham that he already has a hard and fast faction which is preparing against the day when some differences -- any difference! -- will enable it to bob up triumphantly as (to quote Gould) "the only group that can come before the party at this juncture and honestly place before the membership for examination" its "record".

When Weber writes to the IS that "we felt...that it had become necessary after March to open up the discussion on the French turn so as to bring about ideological clarification" -- he neglects to add that not Weber, not Gletzer, not Gould, not Satir, nor any other Weberite, ever translated that "feeling" into a single proposal to have a discussion on the "French turn", or a discussion on anything else. When Weber warns pompously in his statement of April 7 against the party being "dragged into pursuing a tail-endist course only to be avoided by the prompt reaction of our leadership to all important events" -- he neglects to add that not one of the Weberites on or near the National Committee ever made one single motion in the PC or the NC, as the minutes testify by elaborate silence, that was calculated to put the party "ahead" of events and stop it from being "tail-endist", so that the leadership, of which they were a party would "react promptly". (Literally! Not one single motion on any phase of party work was ever made by Weber-Gletzer-Satir-Gould up to the June Plenum, i.e., during those six months when, Weber said, the party leadership was following an "opportunist course". Aren't they the men chosen by nature to call the "tail-endists"?)

To the extent that the Weber clique has any political coloration, it represents political sterility, passivity, negativeness, timidity, fear of bold innovation -- a species of conservative sectarianism. Not one single political move has been initiated from their ranks in the two years of their existence, not one single political

proposal in any field (oh yes, with the exception of Glotzer's motion to cable our greetings to the conference of the new Dutch party....) has emanated from them. We initiated and carried through the fusion with the A.P. in all its stages, with never a positive idea contributed by the Weberites, unless one can designate as such the utter skepticism they manifested throughout that period towards the negotiations for the unity. We initiated and carried through, on a sound basis, the fight to endorse the "French turn" in the C.I.A. As for the practical work of the organization, up to and including the Minneapolis struggles, they were conspicuous by their absence in body and in ideas, and contributed only the most grudging half-approval of the results after the fact.

In the W.P., similarly. Every forward step made by the party was initiated by us or by Muste -- in no case by the Weberites. The progressive steps taken by our party on the international field were initiated, in every case, by us, from the January 10, 1935 motion by Cannon to notify the sympathetic parties and groups of our desire to establish fraternal relations with them, down through the Pittsburgh, the June and the October Plenums; at best, the Weberites trailed along, with eyes to both sides of the road in the hope of finding another "clab" in some ditch. The progressive steps taken by our party in the fight against the Ochlerite cancer were initiated, in every case, and at every stage, by us; at best (only from October on, i.e., at the end), the Weberites trailed along; at worst, i.e., as a rule, they not only interposed themselves between us and the Ochlerites as a shield for the latter, but helped the sectarians to strike us a few treacherous blows.

The fight to get the party to come out in favor of a Left wing in the SP and to do something about it, was initiated by us; at best we got perfunctory aid in June from the Weberites; at worst, i.e., as a rule, they joined in the cheap Ochlerite clamor about our "liquidationism". The fight for a realistic, Marxian unity policy in the unemployed field was initiated by us and sabotaged by the Musteites; the Weberites either played possum on the whole issue or else -- as is now the case -- they sign their names to the shameful avowals of indiscipline and defiance of the party made by the Musteites, to the policy which plays into the hands of the reformists and Stalinists. The fight against Stalinist influences in our party, manifested so crudely in Allentown, was initiated and carried through by us, for a long time together with Muste; when his factional interests caused him to make a 180 degree turn on the Allentown situation, he found the Weberites on hand to help him shield the microbe-bearers of Stalinism.

Now, when we have initiated a new step forward for the forces of the 4th International in this country, when we propose entry into the SP and W.P.S.L., the Weberites again come forward with their sterile, negative position, in the same dead spirit and with the same arguments -- reeking of sectarian timidity -- (to say nothing of the same factional distortions) they advanced a year and a half ago against fusion with the A.P. Is it any wonder that the branch they have dominated for two years -- Chicago -- which they have "led" without contest, continues to suffer from that terrible stagnancy and sterility which is a reflection of the leadership of Weber-Glotzer-Satir; that, with Chicago our second most important political center, the branch simply does not recruit, that it has no contacts at all in the trade unions, that its sale of literature is poorer proportionately than that of any other important branch, that its public meetings are few and far between -- in a word, that the pseudo-intransigent conservatism and sterility of the local leadership is like a dead hand on a branch which nevertheless contains a good many virile, healthy elements, especially among the younger comrades, who, once liberated from the lack of initiative and wordy passivity of the Weberite clique, could bound forward toward effective participation in the stream of the living movement.

If we were commanded to give a summary characterization of the Abern-Meter faction, our formula would confine itself to two words that describe its political pro-

disposition and its organizational methods: a conservative clique. The existence of a tumor and the dangers it represents are not made any the more tolerable by the fact that the tumor is a small one. Be its forces large or small in our party -- and fortunately they are small and are getting smaller every day that its position is dragged up into the open -- it represents an unhealthy and sinister current in our bloodstream -- the stream of revolutionary Marxism, which bases itself on principled considerations and operates with tested and honored political methods, which detests clique politics and personal combinationism. Its morals, its manners, its customs, its methods, make it an alien system in our movement. We did not combat Galleries only to suffer it silently in another form and under another name, but which, in some respects, is worse. If our movement is to grow to its full stature, if it is to measure up to its grand tasks, the Weberite system of politics must be ruthlessly eradicated from the minds of those comrades in our ranks who have been made its victims.

A FINAL NOTE: THE MUSTE GROUP

From every point of view, the Muste group represents a far more significant quantity and quality in the labor and revolutionary movements than do the Weberites. This is not so because Muste knows more than, or even as much as Weber does about the theory of the permanent revolution, but because he represented to a considerable degree an authentic movement of class conscious militants who have evolved from general labor education, trade union progressivism and activism in the class struggle, to the ranks of the Bolshevik political movement. Each one of us has evolved in his own way to the point; important is the fact that, despite halts on the road and even excursions into bypaths, the Muste group did not remain standing still but moved to a Left wing position with greater or lesser consistency. Its evolution is, I think, a unique one in modern world labor history, if only because of the fact that it developed to the point that it did principally on the basis of the lessons drawn from empirical experience (in the best sense of the term) in the class struggle, and not so much on the basis of Marxian theory and perspective more or less developed in advance. Precisely therein, however, lies an essential weakness.

Just as we never objected to the Stalinist phrase "social-Fascism" because many socialists considered it abusive, but because we considered it false, so in every other designation of groups and tendencies we seek to follow the established Marxian precept of applying that term which most accurately describes the political physiognomy of the given movement, always bearing in mind that the term which was invalid yesterday and valid today may become invalid tomorrow, even if for other reasons. In qualifying the AWP and its leadership (more than a year ago) as Centrist, we not only did not designate them thus for the purpose of "abuse" (the very concept is absurd in this connection) but, quite the contrary, as an indication of their progressive character. Just as the Centrism of Stalin is reactionary, for it marks a departure to the Right of the Marxian position of the Russian Communist party of yesterday, so the Centrism of the AWP was progressive, for it marked a departure to the Left of the position of its precursor, the C.P.A. That is why we only smiled patiently at those pseudo-intransigents in our own ranks at that time who appealed to us (presumably "old Bolsheviks") to be on our guard against fusing with "people who will never become Communists" (Glotzer), just as we had to shrug our shoulders impatiently at the same pseudo-intransigents who made a bloc with "people who will never become Communists" against...us.

Our course with regard to the Musteites was at all times grounded on a clear line, worked out with a long-time perspective, of the closest and most loyal collaboration for the purpose of jointly advancing the movement for the Fourth International, of steering it carefully through its first difficult period, of protecting it from its numerous foes both outside and inside the party. From the point of view of straightforward progress, the first six months of the existence of the party were undoubtedly its most fruitful ones. That was made possible by the loyal collabora-

tion of the Musteites with the Marxian core of the CIA. Our standpoint was, throughout the whole first period (we expressed it more than once) that while we were anxious to facilitate the utmost cooperation with the Weberites, and even with the Oehlerites, the main basis for the progressive development of the party consisted in the collaboration between the elements grouped around Muste and those grouped around us; not the whole basis, but the main basis. It was on the foundation of this joint intimate work that the Muste group, in that period, made a consistently progressive contribution to the advancement of our movement.

The sharp, totally uncalled-for rupture of this collaboration which was effected on Muste's initiative at and after the June Plenum indicates, above all -- and we are perfectly ready to acknowledge the fact -- that we had overestimated the speed and the quality of Muste's development from an uncertain Contrist position on political questions to the more sure-footed and consistent position of Marxism. Muste, brought face to face with the need of drawing another, and more significant, logical conclusion from the whole course he had been pursuing in common with us, drew up short, balked, stood stock still, then moved backward, and, because we were pressing for another step forward, the breach necessarily occurred. And it occurred on the most crucial question then confronting the party: the need of taking another step against the insolent provocations of the reactionary current in our party, the Oehler anti-Trotskyists.

That our collaboration with Muste was indisputably loyal and free from any trace of deception, has already been adequately established. Muste only puts himself in a rather dubious position when he charges us with disloyalty, concealment and duplicity on the basis of that very letter of Cannon to him in Toledo in which Cannon sets down, clearly and unambiguously, the facts of the situation and the course which he proposes the party shall take, and invites Muste to talk things over with him upon his return to the Center. Not until the open break at the Plenum itself, did Muste ever so much as hint to us his feeling that we were guilty of those wildly-hurled, irresponsible charges which he subsequently levelled at us. After six months of unbroken collaboration with us, he did not think it possible, or necessary between his return from Toledo and the opening of the Plenum, to draw us aside in conference and, by comradely discussion, at least attempt to arrive at an understanding and mutual agreement.

Instead, he turned to those whom he had denounced three months ago as "sectarian and factional" and whom he would be compelled to denounce three days later as "slandrers" -- the Oehlerites -- for the purpose of carrying out an action on the eve of the Plenum which self-restraint advises us to qualify as...not quite loyal and hardly responsible. What we refer to is dealt with at length in the statements made by Muste and McKinney concerning their conference with the socialist "Y", as recorded in the minutes of the control commission of the June Plenum. The Oehlerites had whispered a venomous lie in Muste's ear about Cannon. It apparently never occurred to Muste to report this to Cannon and ask him for an accounting; or even to report it, more formally, to the PC and demand an accounting from Cannon there. Merely on the say-so. of a couple of proved calumniators, Muste and McKinney proceeded to meet with the non-party member "Y", without notifying the party or its PC, without obtaining their permission, and, to top it all, together with Stamm and Oehler. Even after this meeting was held, Muste did not report it either to the PC or to Cannon. We heard of it second-hand, confronted Muste with it on the eve of the Plenum, and only then we were told of the whole sordid action. The interesting minutes read:

"WEST: Did you report your conference with Y to Cannon?

"MUSTE: No, I, the contact with Y, mentioned to Cannon subsequently the fact of our conference and when this question was brought up at the conference at Cannon's home a few nights ago I reported on it in the same manner that I have now done.

"WEST: Did you believe that holding a meeting with Cannon and Stamm

served this purpose?

"MUSTE: Yes, there was no other way to check up on Oehler's and Stamm's statements except in the presence of Y where discrepancies would have been revealed and could have been immediately followed up."

Yes, there were at least two other ways "to check up". One, was to ask Cannon for his version of what had happened; the other, was to invite Cannon to this conference with Y. After all, it was Cannon who was really being "checked up on". But it seems that it never occurred to Muste, who took Oehler and Stamm along to meet with Y, to invite Cannon along so that he too might see to it that "discrepancies would have been revealed and could have been immediately followed up". In two blunt words, Muste's conduct was irresponsible and disloyal.

That there is nothing maliciously disloyal in Muste's conduct we are perfectly ready to acknowledge. For that matter, it is not very important. What is important is the fact that, especially during and since the June Plenum Muste revealed a relapse into the Centrist vacillations from which, when collaborating with us and our line, he had been progressively moving away; he revealed an inability to analyze clearly so as to have a political line that would carry him in one consistent direction for a measurable period of time; he revealed an inability to connect his yesterday logically with his today, so that every morning he had to make a sharp turn, unload the responsibility for everything he did and said yesterday, and hunt about for somebody to blame for having "misled" him. These are not the traits of a man with a consistent political position.

Reflect on the following telling gyrations:

In March, he stood firmly with us, designating Oehler as sectarian and factional, and rejecting Cohen's criticisms for what they really were: formalistic, unreal, sterile.

In June, he was almost indistinguishable from Oehler, would not allow a single, even mildly critical resolution to be adopted against him, poured all the abuse of his command at us, and a week later organized not merely a bloc, but a faction withCohen.

A couple of weeks after standing like a Horatius at the bridge against any censure of Oehler, he was compelled to make a motion in the PC to censure Oehler.

Two months later, he broke with Cannon and found himself allied -- O fatal! -- with the Weberites. A couple of weeks thereafter, at the October Plenum, we all joined in a bloc, based on unanimously adopted resolutions, against Oehler. Before a month had passed, the bloc was once more disrupted by Muste and Weber, who launched first a sly and then an open caucus campaign against us.

What political consistency would the graph of this mercurial line reveal?

Take the case of the struggle against the Oehlerites. We joined issue with the Oehlerites in Pittsburgh and adopted, together, a political resolution, clear, plain, simple, obvious, of condemnation of the factional sectarians. A brief three months later, Muste declared at the June Plenum: "A number of Plenum members, not being acquainted with the past history of the CLM and with Comrade Cannon's organizational methods, voted for this resolution in ignorance of its full implications. Duplicity in Comrade Cannon's procedure insofar as the former AWP comrades are concerned, was, in our estimation, involved in this action." Three months after this statement, Muste had to expel the Oehlerites, who, politically speaking, wrote this statement for him, because in it was contained their line, their arguments, their attack.

At the June Plenum, we stated that the Oehlerites represented an anti-Trotskyist faction, i.e., anti-Marxist. This entirely correct, ICC confirmed and purely

political estimate, was denounced by Muste in his statement: "The attempt of the Cannon-Shachtman faction to make it appear that the Plenum is now confronted with the issue, e.g. of 'Trotskyism' vs. 'anti-Trotskyism' is another illustration of the utterly unprincipled way in which these leading comrades constantly twist issues...." (By the way, what did Weber and Co., who know then that our estimate of the Oehlerites was correct, just as everybody, including Muste, knows today that it is correct, what did Weber and Co. do to correct Muste's view at the Plenum? Did they solidarize themselves with us? Of course not!)

We proposed a bloc with Muste (and Weber) to fight Oehler and Oehlerism, on the basis of a common political line of solidarity with the main stream of the Fourth International. They replied by drawing up a common resolution with Oehler, acceptable to the latter but not to us; in other words, they made a bloc with Oehler against us.

We proposed to direct the fire of the Plenum against the Oehlerites as the main danger to the party. Muste answered our proposal by writing about us in his statement: "No solution of political questions is possible nor healthy party activity of any kind, so long as these stupid, factional, brutal, individualistic and unprincipled methods are used by party leaders." No censure of Oehler -- God forbid -- for that might offend him; but not abuse strong enough to characterize those with whom Muste had worked in perfect harmony for six months. Where was Muste's fire directed? Read his statement over again today: all the attacks are against us; but not one single word even of implied criticism of Oehler! Read the January 10, 1933 Internal Bulletin of the party: 19 solid pages of the Muste line between June and October, and every one of the 19 pages filled exclusively with attacks on us -- every page, every paragraph, every line. (To be strictly accurate, at the bottom of p. 2, is one single sentence of uneasy apology: "In order to avoid all misunderstanding (!) I wish to state again that I am not arguing for the Oehlerite political position." It's a good thing he does "state" it; otherwise....) In a word, Muste lost all sense of proportion and of political value and concentrated all his fire against us, who were fighting the Oehlerite cancer. Again, to be strictly accurate, not all his fire, because he had none of his own; he merely repeated two-thirds of the Oehler platform and signed his name to it.

In his latest Internal Bulletin articles, Muste charges us (another plagiarism from the Oehlerites!) with having "deliberately started a series of measures beginning with the public attack by Cannon on Zack calculated to bring about the expulsion of the Oehlerites from the party...." But on June 4, he voted for, signed and sent out a statement of the PC which specifically refused this charge! How does Muste make the two contradictory statements to which he put his name, jibe? He does not seem to attach any particular importance to the political position to which he commits himself when he signs his name to a political document. In June, he repudiated his March position on Oehler; in October he repudiated his June position on Oehler; in the Internal Bulletin article he repudiated his June 4 position on the Zack affair; on May 27, he "postponed until after the (June) Plenum so that it may consider the political line of the Plenum" and now in the Internal Bulletin (p.4) he complains that "Cannon-Shachtman insisted that it must be a political convention for dealing with political issues"; at one meeting he voted for the system of proportional representation and voting we proposed for the district convention and a few meetings later, he proposed to re-arrange it entirely so as to get another delegate or two; etc., etc.

What happened in all these cases? Was this innocent Gretchen always "misled" by the Mephistophelean Cannon? Assuming that he has the unfortunate habit of slipping easily into sin, may we be pardoned for pointing out that it is not the business of leaders to be misled, but to lead? And that in order to do that, they must at least try to maintain a consistent line for a given period of time, otherwise

they will not lead, but flounder? And that in order to have a consistent line, they must be guided by considerations of Marxian principle, and not by psychological considerations, and considerations of personal prestige?

Another qualification for consistent leadership is a fairly good memory, that enables one to recall today what he said yesterday, so that he is not constantly in conflict with himself. In the January 10, 1936 Internal Bulletin Muste presents the following (thoroughly Oehleristic) version of the origin of the internal struggle in our party: "The Oehlerites were by no means alone in instigating whatever turmoil existed in the party in the early weeks of their existence. Their open aggressive-ness dated from the West resolution and the Shachtman-Swaback support of it -- in other words, from the time when the disputed political issue was first definitely posed in the party. Furthermore, the party press from the outset had carried material implying approval and support of the French turn." Wrong on both counts! And the most direct refutation of this Oehlerite version is offered by none other than Muste himself -- but by a different Muste, by one -- how shall we put it? -- whose memory of the "early weeks" was somewhat fresher and more than somewhat more accurate. In a report and discussion at the PC meeting of April 1, 1935 on the New York membership meeting of the preceding day, taken down in stenographic summary by Muste's secretary, Comrade D. Prammer, from whose file copy I quote, Muste had the following to say:

"It has been suggested by Oehler (and repeated faithfully by Muste 4 months later! - MS) that controversy was not aroused in party until West resolution came up. This is incorrect. West resolution came up at first meeting after my return from tour when already over the How Militant and other matters a terrific uproar had been created in the party. Oehler, Stamm, etc. were guilty of direct violation of discipline in making the West resolution known to membership and in not openly and vigorously combatting outrageous misstatement as to its contents. I opposed the W. resolution. Its perspective is in my opinion thoroughly incorrect. He did not, however, propose that the party go into the SP and definitely provided for no watering down of WP principles.

"Oehler, Stamm, etc. permitted a disgraceful exhibition of those in political agreement with them at beginning of Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh, thus violating their responsibility to the NC and made impossible the objective discussion of the political issues which they are constantly demanding. Rightly or wrongly the Plenum made a decision. It was their business to accept the decision and particularly after they were given an opportunity to present minority viewpoint at the NY membership meeting to make it clear to the membership and particularly to their own political supporters that the Plenum decision must nevertheless be accepted. They once again openly violated NC and PC discipline in stating that sending Oehler to Illinois was an organizational measure against him. Their line would mean not taking into the party any worker not already completely trained in Bolshevik-Leninist theory and by struggle force out of the party any such worker. This is an impossible conception for building the party. Workers have to be drawn in and their education carried on within the party. This can be done and a disciplined revolutionary party rather than a sect created provided the leading elements in the party are thoroughly trained, disciplined and loyal to the conception of a Leninist party. The course being pursued by Oehler and Stamm means forcing healthy elements away from the WP rather than creating the atmosphere in which they are trained in correct principles and firmly attached to them. If the course succeeds, then by weakening the WP they will force it into the SP instead of accomplishing the purpose they claim to have in mind."

How different in approach, in fact-stating, in analysis and in conclusion, how infinitely correct was Muste when he was being "misled" by a Marxian line! How pathetic it is to see him now, warming over the cold and soggy potatoes of Oehlerism!

As for the second count, his memory fails him again. It is true that after the June Plenum, just before Weber's eloquence finally convinced Muste in favor of the "French turn", Muste, jointly with Cehler, censured us for printing articles "supporting the French turn" (by the way, what does Weber, who opposed the censure and the arguments Muste made for it, say now to the fact that his partner continues to charge us with this "crime"?). But the censure was adopted not for objective reasons, but for purely factional ones. Before Muste had a factional axe to grind against us, he paid no attention to the groundless repetitions by the Cehlerites that under our editorship, the "French turn" was being favored. Thus, the PC minutes of April 15 record a protest by Stamm against an article on the French situation in the New Militant of April 13, a protest similar to the one on whose basis we were censured a few months later. But at that time, Muste made no motion to censure Cannon, nor did Stamm make a motion to censure Cannon, because he knew he could not then get Muste's support. Muste's (read: Cehler's) version No. 2 simply will not hold water against his entirely objective version No. 1 last April!

Or, take the situation in Allentown. Muste now seeks to present matters as if we had, somehow, invented a "situation" in Allentown for the purpose of hounding "honest workers"; or that whatever trivialities may have been involved there, our "arbitrary" decisions kept making them worse. Yet, the Allentown problem is as old as our party, and has always revolved around one central point: the inability or unwillingness of some of the local comrades to resist the infiltration of Stalinist ideas into our movement; their lack of understanding of how dangerous to the working class Stalinism is; their lack of understanding of how to combat it; and the fact that at times they become the direct bearers of Stalinism in our ranks.

As early as January 13, 1935, the PC heard a report from its representative, Cehler, as to the situation in Allentown, and established the need of "assisting the comrades in clarification on the question of united front activities with the CP and the Unemployed Councils and particularly against the CP Labor party agitation". Time and again, the PC concerned itself with the Allentown situation, and always with the same problem: how to combat Stalinism; or more accurately, how to get Reich and Fallett to stiffen a bit against Stalinist encroachments. Up to October 28, when the PC sent out a statement on Allentown to all party branches, and even as late as November 11, the problem continued to occupy us all. And what is more, without a single exception, the PC was always unanimous in its decisions. We made no proposal that Muste ever rejected as "arbitrary" or for any other reasons; Muste never made any proposals that we rejected on any grounds.

Now, however, confronted with the fact that his faction strength is melting away from him, Muste sacrifices the interests of the party for the presumed interests of holding together his Allentown caucus and rushes to the defense of the same Reich from whom the PC found itself compelled, time and time again, to dissociate itself. He covers up, shields, condones the most defiant violations of elementary communist discipline. Instead of helping the Allentown comrades advance towards a revolutionary Marxian education, he coddles them, tickles them, tells them what fine, upright, sturdy proletarians they are and that, being honest workers, they have a right to make grave errors and to strike stiff blows at the party, especially when they have caucus leaders who will shield them not merely from disciplinary measures, but from any efforts to correct their wrong line, dispel their suspicions and prejudices, and help in their education as revolutionary Marxists. Muste doesn't educate his followers; he flatters them. And workers, however honest they are, require, not flattery from their leaders, but a correct and straightforward line of policy. All Centrist vacillation, doubling on your own tracks, constant self-repudiation, are hardly a satisfactory substitute for a consistent revolutionary line.

CONCLUSION

Those who find in what has been written here only an account of a faction fight, of sectarian-circle strife, of a tempest in a teapot, will only cause the author to doubt the efficacy with which he brought forward his central points. Yet, we believe that it is sufficiently clear for most if not all our militants, above all our youth, to discern and understand. Precisely because we want to uproot the last remnants of what has become the reactionary features of sectarian-circle existence; precisely because we want to crush the spirit and methods of intrigue, precisely because we want to redouble the preparations for embarking on the broader field of the class struggle, do we stress so much the main point of this document. Dozens of the details in the document are, in themselves, unimportant. They are adduced here for two reasons: to put an end to some of the corridor versions of events; and to illuminate or illustrate a far more important point.

We have before us a truly breath-taking job: the building of a powerful Bolshevik party in the citadel of world reaction. But this party will never be built -- or if it is built, it will never stand up in a crisis -- unless it has as its spinal column a steel cadre: hard, tough, firm, flexible, tempered. The two are inseparable: a cadre without a party is a skeleton without flesh or muscle; a party without a cadre is a mass of gelatine that anybody's finger can go through. And how else will the Bolshevik cadre be tempered unless, on every occasion, it has hammered into it more and more of the wisdom we have tried to learn from the great teachers: a deep respect for principle and a hatred for cliquism and intrigue; an equally deep regard for objective judgment of problems and a suspicious intolerance of subjective and personal considerations; a political approach to all political problems and a political solution for them. Now more than ever before are these indispensable. For the revolutionists function today amid a veritable sea of corruption and decay of the old movements, the poisonous fumes of which cannot but be felt in our own ranks unless we constantly counteract them.

Slowly, but surely, the basic elements of the Marxian cadre are being assembled; it has not been a work of days or even months, and it is yet far from completed. In the decisive leadership of the party today are represented not merely the best traditions and forces of the American communist movement, and the revolutionary movement before it, but also the strongest concentration of forces of these, old and new, who have entered the movement of the Bolshevik-Leninists in this country in the last seven years. The fact that the ranks of our group comprise elements from the old Cannon faction, the Shachtman faction, the Carter group (even such "splinter" groups as the old Field faction, the Garrett-Glee faction, etc.), plus such elements from the old AWP as Selander, Romaglia and West (of the NC), the Toledo militants, half the Allentown militants, most of the NY activists -- all these indicate that you have here no personal combination, no chance clique that the first real wind will disperse, but the concentration of determined Marxian forces on the basis of a consistent, principled, political line. The scattering of the Kuste group to the four corners of the political globe is a warning sign of the inefficiency of a vacillating line as an integrating force. The molting away of the Weber group is a sign that a clique can hold together only when it operates in the dark, that combinationism, however clever it may appear for a time, has a disintegrating effect.

Unless all indications are false, our party is preparing in its overwhelming and decisive majority, to take an audacious step forward. Audacious, and at the same time hazardous. Taking this step will not diminish our problems, but multiply them, with this advantage, to be sure, that we shall have a far larger arena in which to solve them. This step would prove our complete undoing, however, and no problem would be solved, if we did not proceed, tomorrow as today and yesterday, like the revolutionary Marxian internationalists we aim to remain. If we do, we shall make great progress, and if we fail we shall be hurled back for years. If

the stress we have repeatedly laid on those main lines that have divided our party's ranks for the last year, and the CIA before it, serves to clarify our problems in the minds of comrades who have not always understood them fully, then this document will have accomplished its purpose of being an additional guarantee that the bigger problems we shall face tomorrow will prove easier of solution.
