

A Manifesto to the Members of the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is now engulfed in a crisis of the most profound depth and intensity. Any idea that this crisis is local or temporary, that it is confined to a few weak sections of the Party capable of being ironed out peacefully within a few weeks or months, is an illusion. The crisis is national in scope, and affects every single unit of the Party.

By the mass expulsion of more than 100 supporters of the Left wing in New York on transparently fraudulent "charges" and the announced plans to expel the entire New York left wing en bloc immediately, the Right wing clique has taken the initiative to split the Socialist Party.

Experience has already shown that the N.E.C. gag resolution has served as the springboard of the expulsion campaign. The expulsions, coming immediately on the heels of the adoption of the gag resolution, are sufficient in themselves to refute the hypocritical pretense of the authors (Zam-Tyler-Delson) that the gag law would preserve "unity" in the party. These protestations of the Centrist Clarity group allies of the right wing splitters, designed only to deceive the party membership, are empty words. The expulsions are a fact.

Moreover, it is perfectly clear that the Right wing anti-revolutionary clique, having taken courage from the capitulation of the Centrists to launch their expulsion campaign, cannot and will not draw back. The Altman-Thomas Central Committee in New York will complete the expulsion of several hundred Left wingers within a week or two. The Party nationally will thereby be put before an irremediable split, for it goes without saying that every serious revolutionist in the party will solidarize himself with the expelled comrades in New York.

The political aims of the Right wing combination (Altman-Thomas - Wisconsin - Massachusetts) imperatively require this split in the immediate future and they are manifestly determined to carry it through at all costs. Any idea that the demands or sentiments of the Party militants throughout the country can check or alter their course is sheer illusion. Likewise it is naive to imagine that the Centrist leaders of the Clarity group, who have already capitulated to the Right wing, will offer any serious resistance to their expulsion-split campaign. On the contrary, they are already searching for pretexts to drop their "opposi-

tion" and join the expulsion campaign openly.

It is only political realism to expect that at the next stage of the struggle, and in the near future, the Centrists will become the most rabid advocates of the expulsion of the revolutionists and the main executors of the expulsion program. Indeed this is already occurring. The Clarityite majority of the New York YPSL District Committee on July 23rd dropped four comrades from YPSL membership at Altman's demand. The Clarityites act thus, and will continue to act, as the direct agents of the splitters. The Left wing is obliged to see the party situation as it is in reality, to arm itself for the struggle and to prepare itself for the inevitable consequences.

Confronted by such a crisis, therefore, we address ourselves to the only proper court of appeal: to the militant and active members of the Party. We wish to make clear our analysis of the nature and causes of the crisis, and our answer to it. We wish to call upon the militant and active members of the Party to stand four-square with us. We have no fear or hesitation about the outcome.

Right wing failed in its major objective at Chicago was, at bottom, because the vast majority of the active membership of the Party is opposed to the Right wing; and because, in spite of padded Right wing membership lists and outworn eligibility requirements, the Chicago Convention was sufficiently representative to enable the voice of the active membership to be heard firmly on the Convention floor. The Right wing could not, and cannot, cope with a Convention representative to any considerable degree of the Party membership. Indeed, the Left not merely defeated the major plan of the Right wing, but was even able to make some positive headway, as shown especially in the decisions on the questions of war, the People's Front, and the trade union question.

Once again, however, the fundamental issue was left undecided. The victory, such as it was, was only partial; and the partial victory was counter-balanced by defeats. The decisions of the Convention on the internal group organs, the exclusion of representatives of the Appeal tendency from the N. E. C., the failure of the Convention to act on the Moscow Trials or on Spain, showed the strength and the determination of the Right wing.

Nevertheless, the Left was prepared to accept the decisions of the convention. The Socialist Appeal was suspended in accordance with the convention decision. The Appeal caucus was dissolved. The adherents of the Appeal tendency, to the extent that it was possible, threw themselves into the positive job of building the Party in the mass movement.

The Right wing, on its side, was unable to accept the results of the convention. The convention demonstrated to the Right Wing that, given a normal development of the Party, within a comparatively short time—certainly before the next convention—the revolutionary tendency would be in a decided majority, and would take over the leadership of the Party. Therefore, the Right wing decided to prevent, at any cost, the normal development of the Party. Unable to achieve its ends at convention, where it felt the pressure of delegates expressing the will of the active membership, the Right wing determined to proceed by bureaucratic and administrative means, in defiance of the decisions of the convention, and above all in direct opposition to the will of the membership. Rather than to permit the revolutionary tendency to achieve a majority, the Right wing was more than ready not merely to split, but to destroy the party.

The Right Wing's Hands Forced

Additional and compelling reasons forced the hand of the Right wing. During the first week of May, the events in Barcelona drew a line of blood between every species of Popular Frontist, on the one side, and revolutionary socialists on the other. From the point of view of the Right wing, there was an imperious need to suppress the voice of the revolutionists, to forbid the adherents of the revolutionary tendency from explaining to the Party, and through the Party to the working class, the real meaning of the Barcelona events. In the Soviet Union, the unprecedented extent of the persecutions was laying bare the ultimate significance of Stalinism.

The Spanish events and the Soviet persecutions, together with the threatening approach of the new war, were posing as an immediate issue the international question. Nearer home, the demands of the coming autumn elections were requiring of the Right wing a thorough liquidation of any independent socialist politics into the Popular Frontist farmer-labor set-ups of La Follette and La Guardia. Wisconsin was becoming impatient, and showing its seriousness by its overtures to the Pittsburgh Convention of the Social Democratic Federation. The Right wing had no time to lose. On the very morrow of the convention, it began its ruthless and brutal campaign for the splitting of the Party, and the expulsion of the revolutionary left.

In the face of this campaign, the N. E. C., nominally under the control of the Zam-Tyler-Delson ("Clarity") group, soon crumpled up. Trying to shut its eyes and to raise itself above the shattering internal conflicts, and to "ignore" the campaign of the Right wing, the N. E. C. and the National Office were unable to perform even the simplest technical tasks. The Call staggered along from week to week, and soon began to omit pages. The American Socialist Monthly appeared in one apologetic issue, and was heard from no more. The inner-party organ, solemnly voted by the Convention, disappeared altogether. The Convention resolutions themselves had to wait three months for publication!

The N. E. C., timid, fearful, dismayed by the demands of the swift succession of mighty historical occurrences, frightened by the determination of the active membership to respond to those events with revolutionary courage, was unable to stand up against the relentless campaign of the Right wing. At Philadelphia, in May, faced by the Barcelona events, the N. E. C. laid the political basis for its capitulation to the Right wing by voting the shameful Spanish resolution. Thomas returned from Europe, and took his unambiguous place in the ranks of the Right wing. At the special session in New York, the capitulation of the N. E. C. to the Right wing was completed, and the bloc between the Clarity leadership and the Right wing sealed, by the unanimous adoption of the infamous "emergency" Resolution. By the terms of this resolution, the N. E. C. abdicates power to the Right wing, assigning it full freedom to pursue to the end its campaign to eliminate the revolutionary Left.

Without hesitation, the Right wing has accepted its cue. On July 6th, the Altman administration of Local New York voted the first expulsion and suspensions of adherents of the revolutionary tendency. The "split situation" thus passes from threat to actuality—an actuality created by the Right.

It is necessary to understand with absolute clarity the political foundation of the crisis in the Party. This is all the more important, and more difficult, because systematic efforts have been and will be made by the Right wing and by the N. E. C. obscure and cover over the political foundation. There will be much talk of "discipline", "method", "tone", "Party loyalty", "Constitution", "disruption", and what not. It is, however, a uni-

1. - The Background of the Crisis

This is not, of course, the first crisis in the Socialist Party. We do not refer to the great crises of past days, to the split with De Leonism, or the crisis of the war-time or during the founding of the Communist International. These belong to past cycles of development, and are related to the present struggle so indirectly as not to bear directly upon the present period of the Party's history. But the present crisis is directly related to, is in fact the climax of, that cycle of the Party's evolution which began in 1933-1934. It was during this time that Hitler's consolidation of power in Germany, together with the role that the workingclass parties had played with reference to Hitler, proved finally and conclusively that there was no existing revolutionary party capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power and to socialism. The task was posed of re-building the revolutionary party against both social democratic reformism and Stalinism, and against the respective International organizations which embody the ideas and policies of social democracy and Stalinism.

In this country, this task was accepted, with varying degrees of clarity and understanding, by many of the active members of the Socialist Party. This, in its turn, meant that a fundamental issue had been joined within the Socialist Party to which the entire future course of its development would be subordinated, and which, manifesting itself in periodic crises, would continue to control the evolution of the Party until the issue itself was finally settled, one way or the other. The issue was, simply, that between revolutionary Marxism on the one hand and non-revolutionary politics—reformism, Stalinism, centrism—on the other. The problem was: whether the revolutionary current would triumph, and would transform the Socialist Party as an organization into the revolutionary party of the American working

class; or whether the non-revolutionary currents would consolidate their grip on the apparatus of the Party, condemn the Party thereby to disintegration and sterility, and compel the revolutionary current to turn elsewhere for a suitable organizational instrument. What the outcome would be, no one could foretell with certainty in advance. But what could be known was that the Socialist Party could not resume for any length of time a normal life until the outcome was irrevocably determined.

The Fight Against the Old Guard

The first phase of the task, dictated by the nature of the Party itself, was the struggle against the ideas and the organizational control of the Old Guard. This first phase resulted in two major Party crises, one occurring over the Detroit Declaration of Principles, the second over the New York split and the Cleveland Convention. In both of these, the Old Guard was defeated, and the Party was left in a position to continue its development to the Left. The struggle against the Old Guard, however, had enlisted a combination of Party members of widely varying points of view, ranging from clear revolutionary Marxism through every shade of centrism to reformism which was impatient with the Old Guard not at all because of the ideas it held but only because of its organizational passivity. Consequently, the two defeats of the Old Guard (the second of which resulted in the secession of the major portion of the Old Guard) were not at the same time clean-cut victories for the revolutionary current; and did not solve and could not have solved the fundamental issue. They served, in the last analysis, simply to leave open the question of whether the Socialist Party would become the revolutionary party of the American working class.

During the struggle with the Old Guard, individual revolution-

ists, and an entire revolutionary group (the former Workers Party), for the first time since 1919, joined the Socialist Party, in order to remove the organizational barriers which separated them from the revolutionists and left wing militants within the Party, to fuse with them, and to join them in a common struggle for revolutionary ideas and a revolutionary party.

Following the Cleveland Convention, and still continuing, a new regroupment of forces has taken place within the Party. The remnant of the Old Guard, and those whose opposition to the Old Guard was non-revolutionary in character, all that is reactionary and conservative and passive in the Party, together with agents open and disguised of the Old Guard was non-revolutionary banded together in a new Right Wing, resolved to prevent at any cost the completion of the evolution of the Socialist Party into a revolutionary party, and to defeat the revolutionists. On the other side there has been welded together into ever firmer unity the genuinely revolutionary forces within the older "anti-Old Guard" grouping together with the newer revolutionary reinforcements. The alignment in the Party struggle has thus altered. The fundamental issue, however, remains the same as in the two years preceding the Cleveland Convention.

The Chicago Convention

The conflict between the revolutionary and non-revolutionary currents reached a third crisis just before the Chicago Convention. The new Right wing, egged on from outside and inside the Party by the Stalinist agents, was eager to utilize the Convention for the achievement of their plans through the expulsion of the revolutionists. In this aim the Right wing failed, and to that negative degree at least, the Chicago Convention was another victory (however unsatisfying) for the Left. The reason why the