

Case of Rotten Liberalism in the Party

Confronting the Socialist Party at the Decisive Stages of the Struggle

prime concerns is the Trotsky trials. This is absolutely untrue. We have allotted six and one-half columns to the matter of the Trotsky investigation in Mexico during the last fourteen weeks. For ten weeks we ran nothing on the investigation, although our party has endorsed the American Committee. All our news dealt with statements of John Dewey. We gave a little more than 3 per cent of the available space to the Mexico investigations.—In day by day action, as we see, the difference boils down to Tyler's apologizing for 6 and one half columns in 14 weeks and silence in 10 weeks and Altman's demanding no columns at all for 52 weeks in the year.

"We have implied criticism of Blum's policy of non-intervention, we have been openly critical of Negrin in one issue. We have not run any articles outside of these, attacking the French party, the British party, the Spanish party, the Belgian party, the Dutch party. We did not attack these parties despite the fact that they were committing criminal errors and damaging the cause of international socialism."

Criminal Silence About Criminal Errors

The space of the Appeal is very precious, but we cannot refrain from reiterating Tyler's own supine apology to Altman, his confession of rotten liberalism, his self-characterization of a whole political line of action: "We did not attack these parties despite the fact that they were committing criminal errors and damaging the cause of international socialism."

The left wing wants to speak out in condemnation of the crimes of the Blums and Negrins of the whole world, including America, crimes which are wrecking our international cause. The right wing wants to speak out in praise of these crimes. The contribution which the rotten liberals of Tyler's "school" make in practice to the dispute between these two annoying extremes, is to remain silent about the crimes, on the smug theory that this surely ought to satisfy the "splitters" and "keep the party united". But in law and in politics, knowledge of guilt and silence makes one an accessory to the crime after the fact. And this gives us Tyler's role—the role of the Clarity leadership—in a nutshell: To strike the real blows at the left, with whom "we agree politically", using all the stock reactionary arguments of the right wingers ("sectarians", "splitters", "unassimilables"), and to cover with silence the crimes of the right, with whom "we have nothing in common politically".

Are more proofs needed? Let us review the most recent examples:

At the Philadelphia NEC meeting, the test question before all party tendencies was the crisis in Spain. The majority resolution stood for political support to the People's Front in the concrete, designating it as the "provisional revolutionary government". Tyler, under our pressure, presented a "little reservation". He merely argued that this "provisional revolutionary government" had acted the same way in Spain as Noske and Scheidemann had acted in Germany in 1919 when they led the counter-revolution to a victory against the Spartacists. In other words, he spoke for one side of the barricades.

The left wing, taking its words seriously launched a struggle in the party and the YPSL against the resolution which supported the Popular Front counter-revolution, that is, we identified our day by day action with our documents. And Tyler? Faced with the necessity of a choice in action, he turned into the most virulent defender of the NEC resolution. His words about Noske and Scheidemann had merely been an oratorical exercise, similar to those practiced by members of college debating teams who take either side of an argument with equal facility. (We opposed the resolution. Altman, Raskin, Lewis, Zam, Burt, Delson and Felix supported the resolution. Tyler ended by ranging himself alongside of Altman and Wisconsin, with the sickly explanation that the latter had voted for the resolution out of incomprehension of its contents. The convention dispute on the abstraction of People's Frontism dissolved into agreement between Tyler-Clarity and Altman-Wisconsin on the concrete People's Front in Spain. The only remaining difference is that the right wing wants to improve on its victory and go further, whereas the Clarity group won't go unless it's dragged. As for the revolutionists they cannot be dragged.)

At the New York NEC meeting, the test question before all party tendencies was the inner-party crisis. The left wing proposed: Condemn the right wing splitters; condemn the Wisconsin opportunists who are disgracing the name of socialism; prohibit in advance the LaGuardia sell-out. Tyler-Clarity found no common language with us, who "are essentially revolutionaries". They did find a common language, a common resolution, with those they attack in words as "betrayers of socialism". The gag-law, it is true, was advocated in different ways by Tyler, by Thomas, by Raskin. Naturally, the right wing, being bolder, more resolute and more consistent, demanded sharper measures against the left. But the big political fact, which completely overshadows the corridor gossip about what Thomas murmured and what Altman shouted, remains this: The final resolution does not bear the signature of the left wing; it does bear the signature of Thomas and Tyler, of Raskin and Zam, of Baron and Trager, of Lewis and Delson, of Altman and McDowell. The big political fact remains this: Altman, Thomas and Lewis brought their charges against the left wingers and expelled them from the party entirely on the basis of Tyler's gag-law. The big political fact remains this: while the left wing challenged the Clarity resolution, the right wing became its most ardent champion. The big political fact remains this: while the left wing is being systematically clubbed with the gag-law, not a single right winger has his position adversely affected by it. Once again, we see what rotten liberalism in the party means in practice.

The Party Liberal Asleep . . . and Aroused

Finally: we are expelled from the party in which Tyler and Altman sought to gag us. The referendum against the gag-law, legally and properly initiated by us, is cynically sabotaged by the NEC. Edlin, the Altmanite, continues his weekly attack upon us in the columns of the Tammany Jewish Day, where he regularly

discusses all the party's internal affairs from the Altman caucus standpoint. Valenti, the Altmanite, continues his open attacks upon us in the columns of his paper, *Stampa Libera*, for which he is soliciting funds on the claim that it will be the only Italian daily in the elections to support LaGuardia. The Altmanite editors of the official Jewish party organ, the *Shtimme*, make a public attack upon us in the editorial columns, as far back as the beginning of July. The Altmanite, Lasser, continues his scandalous attacks on our comrades in the columns of the *Daily Worker*. The Altmanite, Thomas, continues his appeals for the LaGuardia sell-out in the columns of the *Call*. We are excluded from the *Call*, whose board is divided between Clarity and the right wing, without a single left wing representative (in accordance with the practice of the "fight on two fronts". The Altmanites announce to the capitalist press, in a news release which Zam and Delson call a "betrayal of socialism" (Nothing less!), the plan to withdraw the party mayoralty candidate—before the NEC has "acted", before the New York referendum has begun. All these acts are committed by the right wing liquidators without a single measure being taken against them by the brave Clarity leadership. The editor of the *Call* sails along serenely oblivious to such trifles.

Gagged inside the party, we certainly refuse to be gagged and paralyzed outside of it. We issue the *Socialist Appeal* in order to state our case, just as Altman, Tyler, Zam and Thomas issued the *Socialist Call* two years ago without asking the permission of the Old Guard after the latter had locked them out of the party. We reply in the *New York Times* to the treacherous statement of Thomas and Altman in the same paper, in an attempt to uphold the honor of revolutionary socialism by showing that the bulk of the party membership does not support the LaGuardia deal.

Instantaneously, the editor of the *Call*, entirely fresh and unscathed from his struggle against the right wing front, gets into real action against the left wing front. Instantaneously, the NAC of the party, whose mouth was full of water all these weeks that Thomas was carrying on negotiations to sell the party down the river and preparing and carrying out the illegal mass expulsion, gets into real action, just as it got into action when California's charter was so promptly suspended without even the formality of a hearing. Tyler hastily writes and the NAC approves an editorial for the *Call* on the crisis in the New York party.

What does the editorial do? Does it condemn the "betrayal of socialism", the putting of the SP "on the auction block" by the horse-traders, the sell-out which has been all but consummated? Does it condemn the mass expulsions in New York which the Clarity group at the City Central Committee denounced as "illegal", which they formally refused to recognize? Does it declare that Clarityite branches in New York (for miserable reasons which we shall explain on another occasion) have refused to unseat "expelled" left wingers, have continued to recognize the "expelled" as regular members, have defied and flouted the authority of the Altman group, which is presumably the official party

administration in New York?

Not at all! Not a hint of all this appears in the editorial of the paladins of struggle on two fronts. Instead, with all the viciousness of which your truly timid liberal is capable when he has become completely disoriented and desperate, there is a savage attack upon the left wing, utterly mendacious in its falsehoods.

It Seems That We Have not Been Expelled At All!

Our assertion that we were expelled in order to facilitate the LaGuardia deal—a fact realized even by political infants, and repeated often enough by Clarityites as well—is characterized as "a brazen lie"!

Not only a lie, but a brazen one! But didn't the Clarityites, in their caucus statement just a few weeks ago ("The Die Is Cast") declare: "It is Altman who mobilized the campaign against the Trotskyists months prior to their split perspective, impelling them in that direction and provoking them into a counter-offensive.... It is the Altman group which is brazenly embarking on a policy of suspensions and expulsions for minor or manufactured offenses in order to deepen the crisis in the party. It is the Altman group which show their Popular Frontist and reformist tendencies by attempting to force us into a 'Browderian' support of LaGuardia."

But, according to Tyler now, Altman hasn't split the party or expelled us. It is we who have left the party; we walked out, and Altman is entirely guiltless. Tyler has the infuriating effrontery to write: "Not all the Trotskyists have left (!!) the SP; many still remain. Their very presence proves that Trotskyists are not expelled for what they believe."

A falsehood—in every word; worse, a deliberate falsehood; still worse, a deliberate falsehood calculated to cover up the wretched crimes of Altman and Co. Only a few weeks ago, in the Clarity document just cited, they said: "It is Altman who is excluding and expelling people from the party for political beliefs, returning to the heresy-hunting of the Old Guard." Today, the same Tyler who admitted covering up the crimes of the European social democracy by his silence, rushes to cover up the crimes of the American right wing by his loud lies. Today, it appears, there is "proof" that we are not expelled for political beliefs. In fact, we have not been expelled at all—that was merely a hallucination from which Clarity suffered yesterday and from which we still suffer; we were not expelled, dear reader of the *Socialist Call*, we left the SP!

Read Altman's official statement on our expulsion and Tyler's official editorial. Except that Tyler is more repulsive in his baseness, the two are politically (and in places textually) identical. Both of them announce that we are the "splitters", that we are the "disrupters". Both of them charge that the basis of our expulsion is our "allegiance to an opponent organization," the Fourth International.

Only, Tyler, who cannot write an article that does not reveal his sickening liberalism, does not forget to add in pious justification of the expulsion: "During the last year the Trotskyists have broken from every party in the

world with which they were affiliated—in order to launch their Trotskyist International." The sentence is a platform. It is true that the "sectarian Trotskyists" did not remain in the French Socialist party. They were expelled by Blum and Co. for the simple reason that they fought vigorously and consistently against People's Frontism and social-patriotism. If Tyler were in France, would he have fought with the patriots or with the internationalists? Would he be today in the camp of the expelled or of their bureaucratic expellers? That is the question! Similarly in Belgium, where the left wing was expelled by the reformist bureaucracy which would tolerate no criticism of its betrayals, of what Tyler calls, in his caucus circular, "criminal errors and damaging of the cause of international socialism". Similarly in Spain, where the Trotskyists were expelled from the POUM because they opposed support of the People's Front and entry into a bourgeois coalition government. With whom would, or does, Tyler stand? The Party liberal doesn't say. He merely tells his readers that the Trotskyists were not expelled by Altman (or by Blum!) for their revolutionary opinions.—Oh no!—they deliberately broke, you see, from every "party" because they are incorrigible sectarians.

The Party Liberal Five Months Ago and Today

Could Altman do better? Whether he can or not, he certainly doesn't need to. In order to give countenance to his treacherous political campaign and his mass expulsion, he need only quote from the Clarity leadership. Months ago, Tyler seemed to be on the verge of understanding the mechanics and politics of the right wing drive against the revolutionists. In his article for the short-lived *Socialist Clarity*, he wrote:

"Leading comrades, especially in the large and important New York organization, did not want Trotskyists in the party to begin with, were just praying for them to make slips to be played up, set to work to hasten the day when they could expel the Trotskyists and say: 'I told you so!' (Just as Tyler is doing today!—S.) Instead of a serious effort at assimilation, we are treated to the spectacle of groups being formed with but one program: 'expel the Trotskyists.' Around this slogan a campaign is conducted. A hysteria is created in the Party—a split atmosphere. Name-calling and rumor are substituted for political argument; horror tales are invented; differences are exaggerated and common purposes minimized. In this unhealthy atmosphere, constructive work is impossible. We must put a stop to these splitting trends in the party. And we must stop them immediately." . . .

That was months ago, just on the eve of the convention, at which Tyler, in his private discussions with us, expressed his perturbations about what would happen when Thomas returned from Europe with a full-fledged reformist line for People's Frontism and for Trotsky-baiting in the party, about how pretenses would be trumped up for a split drive against the "Trotskyists", about how imperative was a shoulder-to-shoulder fight against Thomas and his allies, giving no quarter and asking none.

For all his verbose radicalism, (Continued on page 8)