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# **Socialist Party is Split in New York Expulsions: “LaGuardia Socialists” Oust Left Wingers at Rump Meeting of Central Committee [event of Aug. 9, 1937]**

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By a vote of 48 to 2, with 18 not voting, the Central Committee of the Socialist Party, Local New York split the party by railroading through the expulsion in block of 52 leading members of the left wing, at a rump meeting held on the evening of August 9 [1937]. Eighteen of the delegates to the Central Committee meeting denounced the entire gathering as illegal and refused to participate in its high-handed deliberations.

Prior to the meeting, the Altman-Thomas-Valenti clique of “LaGuardia Socialists” had suspended the charter of three left wing branches, thus unseating their delegates, and had also refused to recognize a number of other left wing delegates duly elected by their branches. The most ruthlessly arbitrary measures were thus taken to assure the two-thirds majority required for expulsion.

The 52 already expelled are only the first batch scheduled for expulsion, since an additional 70 left wingers have been brought before the packed “Grievance Committee” on the same trumped-up charges. These 70 do not exhaust the number of the party members listed for expulsion, for the Right wing bureaucracy in control of the New York administration has openly announced its intention of kicking out every supporter of the

left wing, which means more than 450 comrades in New York alone.

### **Farcical Hearing.**

The expulsions climaxed a cynically farcical “hearing” before a committee dominated by Altman faction leaders who, in their caucus meetings, had already voted for the expulsion of the so-called “Trotskyists.” The charges themselves were made on the basis of a blanket “conspiracy indictment,” which did not even attempt to accuse the individuals named for acts of indiscipline, but were limited to the charge of “associating” with an organization, namely, the Appeal group, whose interests were allegedly inimical to the Socialist Party and in violation of its discipline. Demands by the defendants that each individual be presented with specific charges against him, for specific actions, were arbitrarily denied — an action unprecedented in the party and virtually without precedent even in ordinary capitalist courts.

The “Grievance Committee” devoted no more than four hours to hear a case involving the party membership of more than 120 comrades, and then refused to continue its hearings two days later, when the principal defendants and their counsel could be present to make their case with the aid of witnesses like Norman Thomas, Harry Laidler, Girolamo Valenti, Max Delson, and almost a dozen others whom the defense proposed to call for testimony to prove the existence of a factional conspiracy of the right wing to railroad the revolutionists out of the party in order to deliver it, bound hand and foot, to the LaGuardia-ALP [American Labor Party] machine in the coming elections.

### **No Charges Proved.**

At the hearing, the Altman-Siegel prosecution not only did not prove any of its charges, but made no serious attempt to do

so, any more than it did at the meeting of the Central Committee. All the accusations boiled down to the undenied charge that the left wingers *held certain beliefs* and advocated certain ideas, such as that the Socialist Party should disaffiliate from the treacherous Second International and take the lead in rallying the world revolutionary forces into a Fourth International — a belief which the left wing is entirely within its rights to advocate inside the party. Not a single serious action involved a violation of discipline was proved against a single one of the defendants.

In spite of the handicap of curtailed time under which the left wing labored it nevertheless succeeded in making amply clear, in the one hour speech for the defense to which its spokesman, Max Shachtman, was confined at the Central Committee meeting, that the Altman-Thomas bureaucracy had decided long before the charges were actually brought to expel the left wing wholesale, on no matter what formal grounds or pretext, in order to guarantee their continued domination of the movement, their sell-out to LaGuardia, and the liquidation of the Socialist Party into a futile, impotent “educational” sect operating inside a “mass” Farmer-Labor Party. Shachtman also announced the intention of the defendants, who refused to acknowledge the legality of the expulsions, to appeal against the whole procedure to the National Executive Committee, a request from whose National Secretary, [Roy] Burt, for a one-week’s delay of the expulsion until an NEC subcommittee could investigate the New York situation, was cynically ignored by Altman’s well-oiled machine, composed in larger part of “deadwood,” “graveyard members” and incorrigible right wingers, Stalinists, pacifists, and petty trade union officials.

### **Denounce Meeting as Illegal.**

The Central Committee meeting was conducted in so bureaucratically high-handed a manner as to cause the representa-

tives of the so-called “Clarity” group ([Herbert] Zam-[Gus] Tyler & Co.) to denounce the Altman machine as worse than that of the Old Guard and to refuse to recognize the legality of the entire procedure.

The expelled revolutionists left the meeting singing “The Internationale,” undeterred by the expulsions from an even more vigorous continuation of their work to advance the revolutionary socialist movement in this country and throughout the world.

The warning of the left wing now more than ever, has proved to have been justified. The right wing is splitting the party! It is bureaucratically expelling every left wing militant for the crime of revolutionary ideas. It is carrying out the persistent command of the Stalinist Communist Party, the Social Democratic Federation, and the trade union bureaucrats and politicians at the head of the American Labor Party.

We call upon every branch of the Party and every circle of the YPSL to refuse to recognize the illegal and reactionary expulsions. We appeal to every socialist to vote for a resolution expressing complete solidarity with the expelled. Let the voice of the Party and the YPSL be heard throughout the land. Let the LaGuardia Socialists know that the revolutionists throughout the party will stand like one man against their shady deals to betray the socialist movement and their bureaucratic machinations against the left wing.

Unite all forces around the left wing!

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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