British "Lefts" Bar Thalheimer Book

(We publish below some paragraphs from an editorial, "Censorship of the Left," appearing in the June 1937 issue of CONTROVERSY, *a non-party socialist journal of discussion published in London, England.*

—EDITOR)

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NOW consider censorship from the left.

As we announced last month, an advertisement of Controversy was refused by the (London) Daily Worker because it contained the names of Marceau Pivert and Jay Lovestone. The Worker similarly turned down an advertisement of a Spanish Aid concert whose artists included Paul Robeson. And it has now refused an advertisement of C.L.R. James's book "World Revolution."

The climax, however, is a recent episode of the Left Book Club, the victim being August Thalheimer. Thalheimer is one of the world's outstanding communists. He was a close associate of Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin—was editor of the famous Rote Fahne, and the leading theoretician of the German Communist Party. On Lenin's advice he was appointed, together with Bukharin, to draw up the program of the Communist International. During 1924-27 he lectured at Moscow University on dialectical materialism, his lectures being subsequently published in book form in various languages. Recently the Left Book Club announced it as an Additional Book, and the Left News for April devoted a whole page to an appreciative account of it. Members were invited to order it. After many orders had been received it was withdrawn without notice or adequate explanation, and another on a similar subject substituted. This somewhat mysterious business was marked by a singular correlation of events:

1. The three Club selectors are Laski, Strachey and Gollancz. The withdrawal of the Thalheimer book was announced when Laski was in U.S.A. and Gollancz was in Moscow. The only one of the three selectors in this country was Strachey—an official spokesman for the Communist Party. (Laski has always been distinguished by his passion for intellectual freedom. Did he agree to this change of Additional Book prior to its being made? Or subsequently? Or not at all?)

2. Thalheimer is disliked by the C.P. for two reasons. Altho officially one of the two leading theoreticians of the Communist International when the latter was at the height of its revolutionary glory under Lenin, he was nevertheless later expelled from the party. Why? Because he returned to Germany from Moscow to oppose the C.I. line when the C.I. was refusing the united front, and was declaring Social-Democrats and Laborites "social fascists" and the chief enemies of the workers. Ten thousand party members were expelled with him, and he and Brandler formed the German Communist Party (Opposition), and, with Jay Lovestone of the U.S.A. and M. N. Roy of India, became leaders of the International Communist Opposition. Recently he has repeated his offence. Just as he previously charged the Comintern with ultra-leftism, so now he charges it with ultra-rightism, being a persistent critic of the Popular Front tactic, especially as applied in France.

Controversy does not maintain that a socialist or communist paper should admit any and every advertisement submitted to it: the Daily Worker acts quite correctly in declaring that it would refuse fascist announcements. But Controversy does protest strongly against the suppression of left views by left papers, and against the smothering of a left book by the Left Book Club.