

WALT WHITMAN IN RUSSIA

BY ALBERT PARRY

IN 1918 a poem by Walt Whitman, extolling struggle, was translated into the Russian and published as a broadside by a local Soviet propaganda outfit in the small town of Totma, in Northern Russia. At about that time Red troops were passing through the town on their way to the Archangel front, to fight the White Russians and the American expeditionary force. The Whitman poem was distributed among the Red soldiers to inspire them in their stand against the invading compatriots of the Good Gray Poet.

In 1920, in Kislovodsk, a spa of the Northern Caucasus, I was in the midst of an immense crowd of convalescent Red soldiers who wildly cheered the recital, by a Moscow poet, of another poem of Whitman's, the unforgettable "Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!" also in a Russian translation. This translation was done by Korney Chukovsky, a pioneer booster for Whitman in Russia. In my opinion it remains the best translation with which the Russians have so far honored the American poet. Certainly, it was the most popular bit of Walt's poetry in the Russia of 1917 and after.

In 1922 translations of other Whitman poems were issued by the poets and propagandists of Baku, doubtless to instill pride of their oil-fields, their derricks, their machinery, into the local workers, and to spur them on to the reconstruction of

the then moribund Russian oil industry. At about the same time, in Petrograd, university students formed a literary society in honor of Whitman; and so closely did they follow his ideas and rhythms that they were known as the Whitmanians. All over Russia, Whitman's poetry was translated again and afresh, read, declaimed, imitated, quoted in conversation and the press; Whitman was appraised and lauded in a number of lectures, debates, articles. His "Europe" was made into a play and produced on the stage of the Palace of Proletarian Culture. By the middle nineteen-twenties, the influence of Walt Whitman could be definitely traced in the work of a score of recognized Soviet poets, and how proud they were to affirm their debt to the American!

And yet, only in the beginning of the century, Chukovsky's efforts in behalf of Whitman had been ridiculed by some of the best minds among the Russian intelligentsia. Editors refused to print his translations, though they would print almost anything else he submitted, and finally he began to smuggle Walt's work into the Russian magazines by shortening and rhyming it, an achievement of which he is now duly regretful. When occasionally he succeeded in printing unemasculated versions of Whitman, he was jeered, and one Russian journal went so far as to print an article accusing him of a hoax. The journal declared that there never

had been such a poet as Whitman. The first line of the article read: "Chukovsky invented Walt Whitman."

Not that Chukovsky was the first Russian man of letters to notice Whitman. There had been other admirers, commentators and critics among the Russian literati, but at best they had been half-hearted or misleading, or they had talked about him not to their compatriots, standing so sorely in need of enlightenment on Whitman, but to foreigners who already knew him.

No less a man than Turgenev was one of the first Russian connoisseurs to sample and praise Whitman's poetry. In November of 1872, while in Paris, he decided to halt his "A Sportsman's Sketches," and instead to devote his time to the study and translation of "Leaves of Grass." He wrote to P. V. Annenkov, a friend and editor in Russia, that Whitman was "an amazing American poet," and that "one cannot imagine anything more striking." He remarked that he was sending to another Russian editor a few of his translations, together with a brief preface, and Annenkov jealously asked for some of these verses, but in less than a month Turgenev wrote that his illness had interfered with his enthusiasm for Whitman's poetry: "My translations of Whitman have also been stranded on the sand bank, and therefore I cannot as yet send you anything."

A few more months passed, and to an American interviewer Turgenev wearily confessed that his interest in Whitman had somewhat cooled, that now he found in "Leaves of Grass" no more than "some good grain amid a great deal of chaff." To this day, no translations of Whitman's lyrics by Turgenev have come to light, nor has there been any trace of the prefatory article on Walt mentioned by Turgenev in his letter of 1872. The Russian forms, "I am sending" and "I am doing"

are notoriously ambiguous; they may refer to something being actually sent or done, or they may signify only the writer's or speaker's intention to send or do. Turgenev, for all his brief but flaming interest in the "Leaves," may never have translated a line of Whitman's.

This is not perhaps a matter for the keenest regret. Had Turgenev actually made any translations, and had they been published in Russia, they would have been of little immediate value to Whitman, as the soft-stepping Turgenev would probably have transformed the thunder and full-blooded lines of Walt into a sort of oversweetened pink tea. Nevertheless, as Chukovsky rightly remarks, it would have aroused the Russian poets if not the Russian readers. The poets would have been fascinated and thrilled by Whitman, they would have studied and recognized him, and they would have come under his influence decades before the revolution of 1917.

II

All through the second half of the last century and well into the Twentieth, Walt's few admirers felt that, to be successfully introduced into Russia, he needed the backing of some Russian literary idol. Where Turgenev had failed, they hoped for Tolstoy's intervention. They started by the most incongruous likening of the American to the Russian. In 1892 a Russian magazine published an obituary of Whitman under the heading: "The American Tolstoy." But Tolstoy remained silent. The few Whitmanians in Russia then used the derivative method of attack: Tolstoy admired Edward Carpenter, and Carpenter admired Whitman, therefore, they argued, all the numerous Russian followers of Tolstoy must also follow

Whitman. Again, Ernest Crosby was a follower of Tolstoy and found many points of similarity between Tolstoy and Whitman; he also wrote poetry in the Whitman style: therefore Whitman really had a Tolstoyan endorsement.

At length, in the same nineties, Tolstoy unburdened himself on the subject of Whitman. He was far from complimentary and endorsing. He said that Whitman's chief failing was that, despite his great enthusiasm, he had no clear philosophy of life. Tolstoy was displeased with the American poet. He made this statement to his English Boswell, Aylmer Maude, and it was first published in the English-speaking countries. Not until 1908 was Tolstoy's displeasure translated into the Russian and published in St. Petersburg. As a matter of fact, there was nothing strange in Tolstoy's condemnation of Walt. Only naïve optimists could hope for a harmony of the American's hearty rebellion with the Russian's non-resisting piety.

In the first decade of the present century, the need for Whitman's recognition by the Russian public, according to the handful of his faithful in St. Petersburg and Moscow, had become urgent. In 1906, in the Moscow *Vessi* (the Scales), Chukovsky exclaimed: "It is time for Whitman to become a Russian poet. He is on the way to us—to our parlors, our auditoriums, our books. In our souls he has been for a long time and steadfastly, but in our books he visits for a minute only." The *Vessi* being no Russian *Atlantic Monthly*, but rather a way-station from the London *Yellow Book* to our own *Hound and Horn*, Chukovsky's plea was neither heard nor heeded by the mightier arbiters of Russian letters. His endorsement meant little, because he was only a critic, his creative writing being negligible

in quantity and indifferent in quality. The Russians traditionally heed only those critics who are also creators in their own right; there have been only two exceptions to this rule—Vissarion Belinsky and Apollon Grigoriev.

Consider the case of another Whitman booster in those far-off days, one Konstantin Balmont. He is still alive, in obscure West European exile. He has always been a fussy and self-admiring symbolist, but in the first years of the present century he was extremely fashionable. He thought of himself as the equal of Pushkin and Lermontov, and a number of Russians agreed with him. Balmont decided that, backed by his own rapidly swelling prestige, Whitman might at last get a hearing in Russia.

So in the fall of 1903 he started on his ambitious project of translating not separate poems but whole sections of the "Leaves." He worked at it on the Baltic seashore, and his inspiration came mostly in what he termed the enchanted hours of late Northern mornings and evenings. He finished his translation in the fall of 1905, in Moscow, to the accompaniment of gunfire between the revolutionaries and the Czar's soldiers. In the quiet of the Baltic shore as well as amid the fury of Moscow, Whitman's voice was nothing but mystic muttering to Balmont, with a slight and safe democratic undertone. He wrote and published explanatory articles on Whitman. How helpful they were to a proper understanding of the American poet by Russian readers may be judged from the following passages:

If Edgar Poe is my soul's travel from the Southern smiles toward the North, from flowers and kisses toward the crystals of ice, Walt Whitman is the opposite movement. From sorrows and doubts he comes to a positive beginning. Through him, my soul,

gradually freeing itself from the heart's fanaticism, from my ardent fealty to the individual events of my individual life, enters the ocean of Universality and, having merged all the instruments into a thunderous organ, sings abandonedly: "Hosanna!"

Walt Whitman is the South Pole. In the regions of the South Pole there are also many of those ice-fields, which are already known to us, for the journey toward the North Pole we have undertaken many times. But there is also much of the unexplored and the unexpected. At the South Pole, it is well known, there are warm Mediterranean seas, which as yet have not been navigated by anyone, also islands with flowers and fruits, which are like and yet unlike our own flowers and fruits. Through the ceaseless symbolization of all, that for a moment appears in the current of life, through the falling of all the individual streams into one cosmic Ocean, Whitman, many and many times, victoriously approaches the cosmic affirmation of I, who, having looked into a mirror, has gone away from it, approaches the Existence of the Confirmed, which externally spends itself without losing a single of its drops—and perhaps losing but in an unregrettable way. . . .

Plainly, Balmont's advocacy of Whitman's poetry did the American's cause more harm than good. His translations of the "Leaves" turned out to be full of sickly, coquettish, æsthetic jabberwock. There was a lot of Balmont in them, but very little Whitman. The job done, Balmont settled back and waited for the plaudits, but Chukovsky irefully rose to announce that Balmont had wasted his rapturous breath, that he had misrepresented Walt, and besides: "Positively, Balmont does not feel the language from which he translates."

The common gossip soon was that Balmont did not know English well enough to read and translate it, that his wife did the job by translating Whitman into Rus-

sian prose which Balmont then proceeded to versify. The resulting lapses were often ludicrous. The famous lilac-bush in Whitman's door-yard became a "lily-bush" in the Balmont version. Whitman's panegyric to women, "They are ultimate in their own rights," was rendered by Balmont into "They can present an ultimatum." Walt's pioneers became, thanks to Balmont, "the first-born people." The very title, "Leaves of Grass," was transformed into "Shoots of Grass." How much Balmont knew about American letters generally can be seen from the fact that he began one of his articles thus: "In America, there were three great poets: Poe, Whitman, and Longfellow." This article was published as late as 1910, by which time Balmont had had sufficient opportunity to accept Chukovsky's criticism and to rectify his superficial way of studying American literature. It was the same Chukovsky who proved conclusively that much of Balmont's ecstatic critique of Whitman was nothing but rank plagiarism from John Addington Symonds's "Walt Whitman, a Study."

III

Balmont only added another misleading voice to the chaos of errors and misunderstanding that had already existed in Russia on the subject of Walt Whitman. The chaos was started by the very first notice of "Leaves of Grass" to appear in the Russian press. In 1861 the solid *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (the Native Annals) called Walt's opus a *novel*. Thirty and forty years later the date of his death was variously reported by the Russians as 1892, 1895, and 1898. His biography was recited with the most fantastic details. In 1898 a writer in that most serious and reliable of old-time Russian monthlies, *Russkoye Bo-*

gatstvo (the Russian Abundance), thus elaborated upon Walt's part in the Civil War:

He joined a hospital detachment. Under a hail of bullets, under the whistle of grape-shot, Uitmen was carrying the wounded out of the fire on his mighty moujik's shoulders, at the risk of being killed any minute . . . During the campaign, he became acquainted with Abraham Lincoln who valued Uitmen as a poet.

There being no letter or sound W in the Russian language, the American's name had become variously Valt Vitman, Volt Vitmen, Vot Vitman, Uot Uitmen, and Uolt Uitmen, but there were also such weird and thoroughly inexcusable versions as Uait, Guitman, Veitman, Vaitman, Uaitman, and Uaptman. In a desperate attempt at accuracy, a Russian magazine of 1908 printed Whitman's name in Latin letters, and it read: Waet Uhitman.

The problem of Whitman's personal morals had bothered pre-revolutionary Russians long before they knew his poetry, and it also led to many curious misstatements about him. In 1892, in an encyclopedia article written before Walt's death, one Zinaida Vengerova chided the American for the "naïve frankness" with which he "glorifies love between man and woman," but hastened to assure her readers that, according to the people who knew Whitman intimately, "his personal character and life are distinguished by unusual purity." The other extreme of strange information about Walt was reached in Russia in 1913 when a number of Russian magazines translated or summarized from the *Mercure de France* an article by Guillaume Apollinaire giving a sensational account of the allegedly orgiastic funeral of Walt. I cite a Russian version of this account from the Moscow

Bulleteni Literaturi i Zhizni (the Bulletins of Literature and Life) for November, 1913:

Uitmen, secretly from his friends, had saved up a considerable sum of money . . . After his death, in accordance with his will, a great plaza was hired, usually occupied by traveling circuses. The plaza was now circled by a low fence painted green; inside of the fence three pavillions were built: one for the poet's body; another for the preparation of the popular folk dish of the Americans, made of beef and mutton; the third, for the drinks—here were placed barrels of whiskey, beer, lemonade, and water. Nearly 3500 people—men, women, and children—took part, without any invitation, in the ceremony of the burial. All this took place in Camden, State of New Jersey. Three orchestras of uniformed musicians played alternately. Here were all whom Uitmen had known in his life: poets, New York journalists, political leaders from Washington, ex-soldiers, invalids of the Civil War, oyster-fishermen from the native State of the deceased man, trolley-car conductors from Bredvey, Negroes, former mistresses of the writer, also his cameradoes (the word, which Uitmen had considered Spanish and with which he had defined those young men who had presented him with the delights of love, for—alas! the poet had not been a stranger to the unnatural vices), military doctors, hospital orderlies and nurses, parents of those who had been wounded or killed in the war, in short, all who had known Uitmen or corresponded with him.

Pederasts came to the celebration in a horde, and among them the greatest attention was drawn to a lad of twenty or twenty-two, of outstanding handsomeness. This was Peter Connely, an Irishman, a trolley-car conductor, who had been honored by Uitmen's extraordinary attention. Uitmen had often been seen in the company of the handsome conductor, sitting on the sidewalk and annihilating honeydew melons.

Whole mountains of such melons were offered to those present at the funeral. There was no turn for the funeral ora-

tions; everybody talked who wanted and whenever he wanted, standing on chairs and tables, several orators at once. Everybody drank immoderately. There were sixty fist-fights and fifty arrests. Many of the orators, trying to be more expressive, pounded the beer steins with their fists. Here could be also seen Uitman's numerous children with their white and black mothers. At sundown, the funeral procession started. The musicians played vulgar songs; the six pallbearers were drunk.

"The moral is plain," pathetically exclaimed another Russian magazine of the time, *Vestnik Znaniya* (the Messenger of Knowledge). "Great people are at the same time small people, little differing from us sinful!" This magazine tried to show off its knowledge of the English language: while discussing Walt's career, it called him, in English, a *self-madman*. The unintended aptness of this appellation escaped both the editors and the readers.

Quite as chaotic was the Russian idea of just wherein lay Whitman's greatness, and precisely what his message meant. To begin with, the earlier critics tried to put the blame on Walt himself. Vengerova recognized the depth of "certain parts" of his poetry but scolded him for his "general chaotic incomprehensibility of the design." A poet? Well, said the lady, you could hardly call Whitman that. His work was really not poetry but rhythmic prose. If the Russian reader did not as yet know Whitman it should not worry the reader. The facts of the case were that "Whitman's language is hard to understand for an unprepared reader," and the fault was Walt's and not the reader's. For "often one is compelled to read several pages before finding a subject or a predicate explaining the grammatical sense of the whole; the abundance of adjectives, painting the slightest shades of objects,

greatly increases the complexity of phrases which are already long." Anything really good in Whitman? Oh yes, Whitman was human: "Along with the entire humanity he is old and young, light-headed and sage."

In 1883 one N. Popov, writing in *Zagranichny Vestnik* (the Foreign Messenger) propounded a query: "Who is this Uolt Guitman?", and made the following answer: "He is the spirit of rebellion and pride, the Satan of Milton. He is Goethe's Faust, but a happier one—it seems to him that he solved life's mystery." But some thirty years later, Ilya Repin, the famous Russian painter, wrote that, far from being a proud Satan, the American poet was "God's child" and "the second son of Christianity," that Walt had discovered Christ's teachings and repeated them in his new and beautiful way. Indignantly, Repin accused "frivolous mankind" of overlooking this great and only merit of Walt's.

We have already noted Balmont's attempt to foist his own mincing æstheticism upon the broad, manly chest of Walt. Other Russian æsthetes tried much the same trick, even though in some cases their æstheticism was of a somewhat more robust brand. In 1907 Yuli Eichenwald published in *Russkaya Mysl* (the Russian Thought) an article in which he called Whitman's creative strain an artistic Niagara and "an impetuosity of overwhelming words," while Whitman himself was "the most unrestrained man in the world . . . Intoxicated by the reality . . . the drunken host of the universe, he walks along the street of the world and yells genius-like." The main difference between us and Whitman, says the critic, is this: we are children and our way of contemplating the world is childish and obeying, while Whitman is a father. "He

has forgotten that he himself was born; he does not turn back, and he, father, *pater*, sovereignly applies to the daughter-life his *patria potestas*. Much-conceiving, he walks upon the earth, and out of his broad stride there rise the luxurious shoots of life, the shoots of human grass."

Some Russians said that Walt was nothing but a pantheist, others that he was nothing but a democrat, still others that he was a pantheistic democrat or a democratic pantheist. In 1913 in *Bulleteni Literaturi i Zhizni*, an anonymous writer praised Walt chiefly for "that almost inhuman ecstasy with which he transformed democracy into a cosmic, universal force—into a new sun of new skies." He asserted:

Such a cosmic-grandiose soul has as yet been unknown in the world's poetry. . . . The millions of equal hearts transport him into an ecstasy, into a delirium. He does not know a higher exaltation than to plunge into this ocean of humanity, and drown, melt in it. There are neither better people or things nor worse—there is no hierarchy—all things, all deeds, all emotions are equal and of equal rights—and a cow dully chewing her cud is as beautiful as Venus of Milo; a leaf of grass is no smaller than the ways of the sky's planets, and the soul is no greater than the body, and the body no greater than the soul, and we have not as yet prayed to the bedbug and to manure as they deserve it; they deserve our prayers as much as the veriest *sanctum sanctorum*. All are godlike and all are equal.

The Russians loved this idea of praying to the bedbugs and manure, mainly for the touching humility of it. Their own philosophers had long been preaching much the same thing. Stressing Walt's mystic pantheism, Chukovsky found many striking points of similarity between Whitman's work and Rosanov's philosophy. Vassily Rosanov (1856-1919), a

unique writer of some genius, insisted that soul was sex, that all religion sprang from sex, that genius itself was naught but the sexual blooming of the soul, and that conception was the chief mystic act of life. Yet, curiously enough, Rosanov was a confirmed reactionary in politics, while Whitman was deemed by many Europeans a red-hot revolutionary. Chukovsky, stressing Whitman's red color, failed to note this point of difference between Walt and Rosanov.

IV

But how red was Whitman? This was another point of contention between the various factions of his Russian admirers. In Balmont's interpretation, for instance, Walt's fiery democracy turned out to be a namby-pamby sort of thing. He said:

He [Whitman] is the Poet of the Present and the Future. He is a part, and a great part, which rapidly comes to us, which is already becoming our present. The idealized Democracy. The victorious procession of Humanity in the task of conquering the Planet. It is coming, it will come, and Whitman had shouted to us about it.

Early in his worship of the American, Chukovsky wrathfully questioned the editors and the readers: How dared Balmont? What was this talk of Balmont's about Whitman's namby-pamby democracy? Whitman was much more than that, he said; he was the singer of the barricade, with a specific message to the awakening masses of Russia.

In 1905, in an ephemeral satirical magazine, *Signal* (the Signal), Chukovsky printed his translation of the reddest lines he could find in the Gray Poet's "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" Expressly for this act, Chukovsky was promptly tried by the Czar's courts. Six years later, a Moscow

court ordered the destruction of a book of Walt Whitman's poetry as translated, not by Balmont, but this same unruly Chukovsky.

But even before Chukovsky came upon the scene, the American poet was looked upon with suspicion by the Czar's censors and police. Articles on Whitman, expounding his rebellious phases, had been censored by the Russian authorities as early as the eighties. Of such, Popov's article in *Zagranichny Vestnik* was especially butchered. The Czar's were, in fact, not the only police in Europe that could not stomach Walt's redness. In 1922 a new translation of "Leaves of Grass" into the Hungarian was confiscated by the Budapest police as soon as the book was displayed in the bookstores.

Even those Russians who agreed on Walt's redness flew into each other's faces when they tried to classify him as to his party or ism allegiance. In 1909, in *Sovremenny Mir* (the Modern World), an influential radical monthly, one M. Nevedomsky asserted that Walt was an anarcho-Socialist. In the same year Maxim Gorky wrote that Walt, having begun with individualism, had eventually reached Socialism. Chukovsky denied both assertions.

According to him, Whitman was an individualistic rebel from beginning to end, and Socialism to him would have been a strange phenomenon. Anatole Lunacharsky, the late Soviet commissar of education, tried to solve the exact shade of Walt's radicalism in the following profound but vague observations:

Man is immortal. Only the individual is mortal. Whoever does not understand this—does not understand Uitmen. Victory over the individual is mankind's triumph. . . . Democracies, which we could observe till now, have been individualistic. The

power and the grandiose beauty of Uitmenism were in the principle opposite to such a democracy—they were in Communism, in collectivism.

With the revolution of 1917 came Walt's heyday in Russia. The spade work done in his behalf, over a period of years, by Chukovsky and other admirers was not in vain. After 1917, when the Russian radicals felt all alone in the capitalist world, still fighting its imperialistic battles, it was a great consolation and inspiration to recall an ally beyond the ocean. Whitman's sweeping tempo, his broadside style, his faith in humanity, his praise of the machine—all these were peculiarly in tune with the spirit of the Russian revolution. In 1917 Professor Vladimir Friche, an outstanding Marxist, blessed Whitman in an encyclopedia article as "the singer of equal value and equal rights of men, of international solidarity," who "sang the big city, the hurly-burly of its streets, the ceaseless labor of machines, the working people and the folk mass, the busy life of an industrial-democratic society." With the advent of the Soviets, Chukovsky applied himself to the task of re-translating Whitman, for he now regarded his own old translations as too timid. The Soviet-published "Leaves of Grass" quickly became a best seller. A copy of Chukovsky's translations of the "Leaves", which has reached me recently in New York, was published in Moscow in 1923 and marked as the sixth edition. I hear that, in the ten years since then, there have been many more editions of Walt's poetry in Russia.

Walt Whitman is now famous in Russia not as a mystic but as a revolutionary. He is now imitated by such class-conscious poets as Alexey Gastev in his "Poesy of the Working Blow," and a host of other young Communists or Communist sympathizers.

THE STATE OF THE UNION

THE TEACHERS' UNION

BY GERTRUDE DIAMANT

New York City

ON JUNE 8, 1934, 1500 teachers employed in the public schools of New York City gathered at a call of the Teachers' Union to protest the Board of Education's campaign against academic freedom, and the persecution and repression of militant teachers. In a profession notoriously unpoliticized and passive, this represented a mass turnout. The immediate occasion for the meeting was to discuss the cases of four teachers brought up on charges, and to organize plans for their defence. A unanimous vote was taken for the right of teachers to hold their own political views. Resolutions were also passed, calling for the reinstatement of all teachers brought up on charges, and condemning Superintendent Campbell's pronouncement on the ousting of teachers who hold radical views.

Not since the era of suppression during the World War, and the period of Luskism, has there been a drive against academic freedom and the rights of teachers as citizens comparable to the present. The nation-wide attack on education has expressed itself not only in retrenchment programs that bring the state of American education to a level lower than education in the poorest European countries, but also in repressive measures that amount to a reign of terror in the public schools. A spectre is haunting the schools, the spectre of radicalism. In his last annual report as Superintendent of Schools, Dr. O'Shea said:

The radical group has slowly grown in number by the accession of young teachers of like temperament, who find in the destruction of established customs and principles, keen satisfaction. . . . No teacher who ardently holds an extreme view can avoid injecting it into his teaching. A sneer, an intonation of voice, an imperceptible gesture, a one-sided presentation, will carry their meaning to the impressionable children in the class.

Answering an inquiry about the case of a teacher under charges, the Board of Superintendents went on record to the effect that:

There rests upon every teacher in the employ of the Board of Education a duty to defend the Board against unfounded, wild and reckless statements . . . [The teacher] made no protest against these statements. Quite the contrary. She joined in a denunciation of the Board of Education, and she urged the audience to take part in mass action against the Board. Her failure to protest, and her attacks upon the Board, were acts of disloyalty to the educational system. The Board of Education may not be subjected to attacks by one of its employés.

According to these statements every teacher must watch her facial expressions while teaching, lest an unconscious lift of the eyebrow or curve of the lips give her lessons a profound Marxian twist. And any teacher—as pointed out by the American Civil Liberties Union—who was ever present at a meeting during the last mayoralty campaign, when LaGuardia commented unfavorably on the administration of city departments (including education) was guilty of disloyalty, and deserving of punishment.