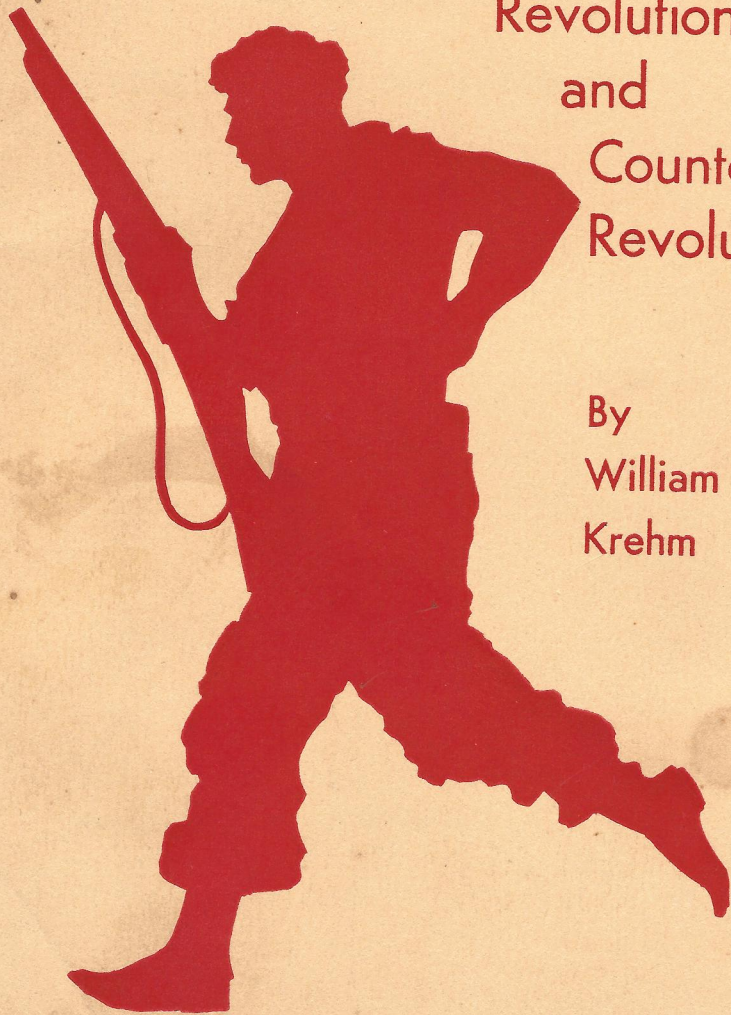


# SPAIN:

Revolution  
and  
Counter-  
Revolution

By  
William  
Krehm



# SPAIN:

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

by  
William Krehm

League for a Revolutionary Workers' Party

## Preface

The present pamphlet raises no claim of presenting a chronological account of the Spanish Revolution to date. Chronological data are presented only to an extent indispensable to a discussion of the most vital lessons that Spain offers to the international working class. Far less is it intended as a dirge over the mortal remains of the Spanish Revolution. The revolution in Spain, though suffering defeat upon defeat as a result of its inadequate leadership, is far from liquidated. The Spanish working class movement has traditionally revealed a stamina and resilience that has enabled it to survive its equally traditional lack of revolutionary leadership.

The Spanish proletariat retains powerful positions despite the advance of the counter-revolution. These it will not surrender without a struggle. Opportunities will present themselves to repair the catastrophic errors of the past. But for that there is necessary the forging of a revolutionary Marxist party in Spain. The international Marxist movement must not evade its responsibilities in assisting this process.

Bitter as have been the dregs of its temporary defeat, the revolution in Spain has instilled new hope into the international working class. In the midst of the revolting phenomena thrown up by the decomposition of a once revolutionary international movement, Spain has proved what many had begun to doubt—that the working class still retains the capacity of waging a struggle which in its boundless heroism can find a place beside the most epic pages of labor history. This is unshakeable foundation upon which to begin anew the building of a revolutionary Communist movement. But there are no short cuts to victory. The exaggerated hopes raised in the breasts of many that the Spanish proletariat would somehow succeed in circumventing the problems and crises that have wreaked havoc with the labor movement elsewhere, were doomed to founder. Against the glorious background of the amazing sacrifices and combativeness of the Spanish workers the wretched role of the old labor

Issued by

**The League for a Revolutionary Workers' Party**  
4 Alexander Street  
TORONTO

movement stands out the more glaringly. The lessons of the Spanish conflict, in no way new, but never before presented with such shattering force, must be assimilated into the blood and bone of the international Socialist movement.

But there is a still more immediate obligation imposed upon the international working class by the course of the Spanish events. The bourgeois republican government, whose ineptitude and treachery in the military struggle against the Fascists has long been patent, seeks its laurels in a murderous campaign of repression against the left-wing organizations in Spain. The prisons of the Spanish Republic teem with thousands of CNT and POUM militants. Scores have been assassinated, and none of those in the clutches of the police can consider themselves secure against a similar fate. The GPU is colonising unhampered its Stakhanovist achievements in Russia onto Spanish soil. Those who were the first to denounce the garrotting of Republican Spain by the diplomats of Non-Intervention, who were the first to call for effective international aid to the workers of Spain, will not be blackmailed into the silence of complicity in order to spare the prestige of the bankrupt governmental crew at Barcelona. The international proletariat must through the storm of its protest let the Governments of Moscow and Barcelona know that they will not be permitted a free hand in their work of white terror.

The scarcity of direct citations of sources in this pamphlet is due to the theft of the files and material of the writer during his arrest and ten-week imprisonment by the Valencia authorities. For the most part, however, the factual data drawn upon are commonly known and beyond dispute.

Toronto, December 1st.

W. KREHM.



## The Historical Background

Fifteenth century Spain stood at the head of a Europe emerging out of feudal darkness. But the victory of Christian Castille was the victory of feudal barbarism. With the expulsion of the Jews and Arabs, in whose hands were concentrated the trade and handicrafts of the most advanced sections of the country, vital members were lopped off the living body of bourgeois Spain. Weakened by this mutilation the desperate stand of the Castillian burghers to defend their privileges was crushed by Charles V in the War of Comunidades (1520). Catalonia, that had established a mighty commercial empire and competed advantageously with Genoa and Venice for the domination of the Mediterranean, was devastated by the feudal Inquisition and excluded from the American trade. The dead hand of feudal arbitrariness settled upon the country to crush everything historically viable.

In the vast and wealthy western empire in America that might have served as the basis for a commercial and industrial development beyond anything known in the 17th and 18th centuries, there was reproduced the moribund feudal regime of the Motherland. Forced labor in the colonies provided the monarchy at home with resources to squander in ruinous dynastic wars in Europe that had nothing in common with the contemporary trade wars waged by the English and Dutch bourgeoisie.

At a time when capitalist development elsewhere was undermining medieval particularism and reducing sectional heterogeneities to the common denomination of the modern nation, the commercial bourgeoisie of the Spanish periphery, of Catalonia, Euskadi, and Portugal, were compelled to raise the banner of separatism in order to escape the blighting hand of the Madrid bureaucracy.

While the other countries of Western Europe, slackening and bursting their feudal bonds, strode forward on the highway of modern development, Spain grew mouldy and decayed. The opening of the eighteenth century found the French Government dictating to imbecile monarchs at Madrid commercial treaties which, while favoring the French bourgeoisie, sealed the doom of Spanish trade and industry. Spain had already become reduced to the position of a semi-colony of the British and French bourgeoisie.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars kindled the first flicker of bourgeois revolt. The nineteenth century is the record of endless military pronunciamientos—the history of the impotence of a frustrated bourgeoisie. The military establishment,

swollen by the repatriation of the troops from the liberated American colonies, and balancing itself between the ruling agrarian class and the stunted bourgeoisie, was able to hoist itself to a position of quasi-independence.

The revolutionary period between 1869 and 1874 epitomised once and for always the role of the Spanish bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie. The Prims, Salmerons and Pi y Margalls, together with their petty-bourgeois successors of the Republic of 1873, dreading mortally any stirring of the working masses, threw themselves into the arms of feudal reaction. To contemporaries of the Popular Front the history of the period has a positively modern ring when we learn that it was the same general Pavia used by the Liberals to suppress the revolt of the disillusioned peasants of Andalusia, who in 1874 drove the Cortes home in order to re-establish the regime of the detested Bourbons.

During the next four decades the Conservative Party of the Andalusian "latifundistas" and the "Liberal" Party of the "trigueros" (wheat barons) alternate in the saddle according to pre-arranged agreement. It is the rapidly maturing working class alone that troubles the idyllic calm of this arrangement.

The World War with its insatiable demand for industrial products led to a dizzy expansion of Spanish industrial plant far in excess of its normal outlets. The armistice and the crisis that followed in its wake left Spain racked by the ailments of an over-expanded capitalism super-imposed upon the long-festering sores of its decadent feudal economy. In 1917 the masses of Spain stirred in a way that caused the structure of the Spanish state to totter. It was spared from final collapse only by the absence of an adequate proletarian leadership. The monarchy sought refuge in colonial adventure. The Moroccan campaign instead of redeeming glory brought disaster. To salvage the situation and to liquidate finally a revolutionary crisis that the workers had not been able to exploit, the Catalan industrialists lifted into power the regime of Primo de Rivera. Six years of murderous dictatorship ensued—under which the old military bureaucracy affected gestures borrowed from Italian fascism. This was the classic period when only the assassination of working class militants by the *pistoleros* of Martinez Anido kept pace with the serried succession of financial swindles and lavish monopoly concessions to foreign finance capital. But even this golden age of bourgeois-monarchical reaction came to an end. In 1930 under the blows of the world economic crisis, Alfonso jettisoned Rivera in a desperate attempt to save his throne. But in vain. The bourgeoisie that had wallowed up to the neck in the corruption of

the dictatorship now cast the monarchy overboard in a similar effort of self-preservation. The revolution had begun. The clique of Romanones and Co., whose Riff mining interests had dragged the monarchy into the Moroccan War, were the first to don the Republican cockade.

## Roots of the Spanish Revolution

If for the ruling classes the Republic meant nothing but the sloughing of the old outworn monarchical skin, for the masses it is bound up with the solution of problems that had eaten away at the vitals of Spanish society for centuries.

The incredible poverty and backwardness of Spain is rooted in its agrarian regime. A countryside of legendary fertility lies shackled by property relations that keep half the arable land in an uncultivated state, while the rest is worked under the most wasteful and archaic of methods. Immense landed domains comprising at times the greater part of entire provinces exist side by side with dwarf-like plots whose cultivators are bowed under crushing feudal burdens. Spanish agrarian statistics are incomplete and avoid shedding light on the shadiest aspects of the situation. But even this fragmentary account tells a dreadful tale. In the twenty-seven of the fifty old provinces covered by the census, 87.2% of the land-owning peasants had in their possession 34.35% of the land, whereas 1.9% of the proprietors owned 45.23%. Among the provinces not included in these statistics is to be found Galicia, the region of the most minute holdings. Andalusia, the region of large *latifundias*, is also the province of the landless rural proletariat that numbers over 2½ million throughout Spain and until recently worked from sunrise to sunset for two or three pesetas a day.

Spanish industry could not outgrow its sickly character as long as agrarian feudalism maintained the vast majority of the population in conditions of pauperism and crippled the growth of the internal market. In the advanced countries of western Europe the bourgeoisie by liberating the peasants from feudalism had cleared the way for its own development. But what was achieved by the middle class of France during its heroic period was not to be expected from the pitifully aborted capitalism in Spain that was inextricably interwoven with the feudal interests. Banks are pre-eminently bourgeois institutions. But in Spain the banks, for the most part, arose as mere offshoots of the usurers' functions of the large land-owners.

The struggle of the oppressed nationalities for their freedom constituted one of the principal motive forces of the Spanish revolution.

Rickety Spanish capitalism had lacked the necessary vigour to assimilate local differences and had left Spain a patchwork of national divergences. Indeed, capitalist development had been limited largely to the outlying regions, and the struggle of the bourgeois of Catalonia and the Basque country for independence had been progressive in so far as it represented an effort to abstract themselves from the grip of the Madrid monarchy. But with the evolution of Spanish capitalism beyond the stage of mercantilism, the secession program of the bourgeoisie of the national minorities lost its content. Once industry had developed in Catalonia and Euskadi the idea of sundering these provinces from their agrarian hinterland became excluded as suicidal. Secession and autonomy in the hands of the bourgeoisie remained only as an instrument of blackmail with which to extort tariff favours from the central government. Such is the history of the Catalan Lliga Regionalista of Cambo' that began as a violent liberal autonomist opposition, but in 1917, seared by the flames of proletarian revolt, it made its peace with the monarchy and went so far as to support the *coup d'etat* of Primo de Rivera. For Rivera, though he trod roughshod on Catalan rights, lent an attentive ear to the tariff program of the Catalan industrialists. But among the masses of the small peoples national freedom remained a legitimate and ever powerful aspiration and constituted one of the most potent solvents of the old state apparatus. Even in backward agrarian regions such as Galicia, Andalusia, Aragon, Levante, peoples were roused from the slumber of centuries to add their demands of autonomy to those of the Basques and the Catalans.

The Catholic Church was the hangman of Spanish reaction that insinuated itself into every sphere of Spanish life to keep vigilance over the interests of the landed barons. Without the aid of this super-state apparatus, feudalism in Spain would never have succeeded in maintaining its withering hold on Spanish society. But the Catholic Church in Spain was more. It was itself the foremost beneficiary of the system that it propped up.

It was estimated that one-third of the national wealth was in the hands of the Church—railways, mines, banks, newspapers, cinemas, and industrial enterprises of every kind. The right wing parties from the CEDA of Robles to the Falange of Rivera were so many puppets groomed and financed by the Jesuits. The Church's grip on the educational system and the 50% illiteracy in the country (statistics of semi-illiteracy are never given) were two mutually conditioned phenomena. It was impossible to approach the struggle for the liquidation of feudalism without applying the axe to the roots of clericalism in Spain.

The Spanish army reproduced the parasitism and corruption of the Spanish ruling classes themselves. There were more generals to be found in the Spanish army than in all the armies of the rest of Europe combined. Well over two-thirds of the military budget went to paying the salaries of officers. Notoriously worthless as it was for any foreign war, both bourgeois and agrarians at home clung to it as their savior against the rebellious workers and peasants. The army was able to exploit the political impotence of all sectors of the ruling classes, bourgeois and feudal alike, to raise itself to the position of supreme arbiter in the arena of Spanish politics.

### Black Record of the "Red Two Years"

The bourgeois republicans did nothing to smother reaction out of its lairs. For two years they tangled up the issues in parliamentary red tape, played for time, exasperated their following, but above all left matters essentially the same.

An Institute for Agrarian Reform was set up and a brilliant scheme elaborated for the purchase of the feudal estates at handsome prices and their distribution among the land-poor peasants. All in all it was decidedly less daring than the 1861 land reform of Czar Alexander II—who at no time advanced the pretension of being either a revolutionary or a republican. Were the schedule maintained, it would have required approximately over a century to settle all the land-needy peasants, and should still have left them saddled with redemption obligations to the state. But even so breakneck a tempo could not be maintained. After two years of operations almost three-quarters of the modest funds allotted to the Institute for Agrarian Reform remained unspent.

The treatment of the national problem tells the same sordid tale. In Catalonia where the republic with the status of parity in a future Spanish federation had been proclaimed on the overthrow of the monarchy, Messrs. Azana & Co. were confronted with an accomplished fact. Although they persuaded the Catalan Esquerra to retreat from so extreme a solution, they were not able to re-establish the old oppressive relations between the central state and Catalonia. But elsewhere, the other small nationalities, the Basques, Galicians, etc., looked in vain for the removal of the tyrannical heel of Madrid bureaucracy from their necks.

The church came in for an altogether tender consideration on the part of the Republic, devout Catholics that its staunchest pillars were. While serving notice of the cessation of the state subsidy after two years, the Republic continued to pour tens of millions of pesetas into the treasury of its declared enemy. The property of the church

was left untouched. The sole exception was the case of the Jesuits who were reduced to the inconvenience of transferring the nominal ownership of their immense interests to private individuals. The stranglehold of the Church on the educational system remained in reality unbroken.

In the army nothing changed. The grandiose reform project of Minister of War Azana consisted in offering those of its innumerable generals who wished it retirement on full salary. The bloodhounds of the monarchy continued in their positions of responsibility. The armed forces were too vital an instrument for the defence of private property to be tampered with. The first revolt of the monarchist generals under Sanjurjo in 1932 was shown sufficient clemency to permit the same Sanjurjo to take a leading part in organizing the insurrection of 1936 on a more seriously prepared basis.

But the Government of the Republic did spring into life when it was a question of repressing the masses who had become impatient of waiting for salvation from the Cortes and had taken things into their own hands. In January, 1933, occurred an uprising of Andalusian peasants. Azana sent in the Civil Guards who cold-bloodedly wiped out the greater part of the Village of Casas Viejas under the eminently Republican slogan of "Fire at the bellies". Further anarchist uprisings received similar treatment. The militarists found the same unhampered scope for their talents of generalship as under the monarchy.

### The "Black Two Years" and the Asturian Struggle

This dismal record of the first two years of the Republic produced a widespread disillusionment that the clerical reaction of Gil Robles with its affectations of fascist demagoguery was not slow to exploit. The elections of November, 1933, gave unmistakable expression to the bankruptcy of the bourgeois republican regime. The party of Azana was wiped out almost entirely, and the Socialist Party, senior partner in the previous coalition cabinets, lost half its seats. Reaction triumphant began the brutal liquidation of the fragile bits of window-dressing with which the republicans had garnished their regime. But the plans of the Right overflowed the bounds of a purely parliamentary revenge. From the moment of their return to power they began overt preparations for the suppression of the working class movement and the establishment of a clerical-fascist dictatorship.

The working class, though stunned and disorientated, began to weld its defence against the frontal attack that menaced it. The

Allianzas Obreras (Workers' Alliances) advocated for years by the Trotsky group and the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc of Maurin, began to take shape. The anarchist bureaucracy with its monopolistic pretensions opposed fiercely the formation of such alliances. Only in the Asturias, where the anarchists had traditionally appeared as protagonists of the united action of the working class, did the CNT participate. The Stalinites, with their raucous nonsense of "the united front only from below", did everything in their power to sabotage the Workers' Alliances, but veered to effect a last-minute entry into them.

At the beginning of October the entry of Gil Robles into the cabinet provoked the armed uprising of the working class. In Catalonia the CNT opposed the general strike called by the Workers' Alliances and went so far as to broadcast an appeal to the workers to ignore it from the government radio station. The democratic heroes of the Esquerra, Companys and Co., refused to give arms to the working class, with the result that the Catalan Republic that they had proclaimed was easily crushed by the Madrid troops. In Madrid under the leadership of Largo Caballero the struggle did not pass beyond a general strike and sporadic skirmishes.

It was in the Asturias that the proletariat fought an unspeakably heroic but tragically isolated struggle. During two unforgettable weeks the workers held power, established the region on a rigorously disciplined war basis, sent out the workers' militia to wage battle against the overwhelmingly superior government forces that besieged them. Into the historic Asturian mountains, dear to the Christian heart as the last stronghold against the Moorish invader, the saintly clericals of Madrid poured the barbaric Moroccan troops to conquer in the name of Christianity. This was neatly accomplished in seas of blood, with the most indescribably sadistic tortures. Six thousand workers were massacred and sixty thousand of their comrades filled the prisons of Spain to the bursting.

Though suffocated in blood the action of the Asturian miners was not in vain. The "bloodless" capitulation into which the mighty German proletariat was tricked through the divided labors of Socialist and Communist Parties, stung more demoralizingly than the lash of the Nazi torturers and hurled the revolutionary movement back a whole epoch. In Spain the workers' morale, if anything, after the choking sultriness of the first two years of the Republic, was redeemed by the epic defeat of the Asturias. The triumph of reaction reposed on feet of clay. One year after the October blood-bath, the Spanish labor movement was once again unmistakably, irresistibly on the upgrade.

## Enter the Popular Front

But the Stalinites and the reformists scurried to dig new pitfalls for the new wave of proletarian upsurge big with the promise of social revolution. The Popular Front having come into its own by the grace of Stalin, the ideal formula was at hand to harness the working class once again to a bourgeoisie whose impotence and vassalage to feudalism is attested by the whole course of modern Spanish history. And how indeed should Messrs. Barrios and Azana, whose hands still reeked with the blood of Casas Viejas, who had decried the glorious struggles of October, 1934, how should they have repaired their threadbare prestige otherwise than by quaffing the rejuvenating waters of the Popular Front?

The program of the Popular Front contained among others the following points: "Strict maintenance of the principle of authority"; absolute opposition to the expropriation without compensation of the large landed estates and their distribution to the peasants; no nationalization of public and private banks—instead, improvement in state supervision over The Bank of Spain; vigorous rejection of "workers' control"; a guarantee of the "independence" of the courts.

The elections of February, 1936, gave a decisive victory to the Popular Front, with its bourgeois components profiting disproportionately from the adoption of their platform as the common electoral plank. The anarchist workers, disregarding the advice of their leaders, cast their votes *en masse*.

The masses, instructed by dour experiences to place a minimum of faith in the promises of their leaders, stormed the prisons on the morrow of the elections and released the thirty thousand militants who still remained imprisoned for their part in the October events.

Indeed the uncouth working masses with a wilful lack of understanding for the delicacy of the diplomatic webs spun by Stalin at Madrid and Geneva, chose to regard the establishment of the Popular Front Government not as a solution in itself, but as a mere posing of the problem. While Azana and Prieto took up the thread of their labors where they had left it in 1933 and continued with the old philosophic calm to dally with the most pressing problems, gigantic and incessant strike waves in the towns swept all before them. The peasants in the villages began the occupation of the large landed estates. The reformist and Stalinite leaders alternately pleaded with the workers to re-establish calm and order, and thundered menaces of impotent, congested rage. The bourgeoisie, its morale thoroughly shattered, yielded limply before the mounting offensive of the workers.

The Government intervened to quell the action of the proletariat. To enthusiastic professions of support from the Fascist deputies, the Government imprisoned working class militants, shut down the Madrid headquarters of the CNT, and continued a censorship that gouged entire columns out of the workers' press.

But while occupying itself so diligently with the anti-working class repression, the Azanas and Quirogas turned a Nelson's eye on the preparations for a military uprising that were being carried out from the Right. The Francos, Godeds, and Molas, whose plotting against the Republic had long been an open secret, had been "kicked upstairs" to commanding posts in Morocco, the Canaries, the Balearics, and Navarre, where they were able to prepare the uprising undisturbed.

The hired *pistoleros* of the Falange intensified their campaign of assassinations against proletarian militants. The atmosphere thickened. Calvo Sotelo fell victim to a left reprisal. On the 17th of July came the insurrection in Morocco. The left workers' organization mobilized their followers into a permanent state of alarm. The Government denied the danger and broadcast words of assurance—it had the situation well in hand. On the 19th came the insurrection in all the cities of Spain, with three-quarters of the armed forces and almost the entire officers' corps deserting the Republic.

The Popular Front had led the working class into the trap of reaction. But it was not the Popular Front that led it out. The initiative and heroism of the revolutionary workers alone saved the situation. Assaulting the strongholds of the military with the most primitive and inadequate arms, the workers made good with the mountains of their dead what they lacked in equipment. Within two days the revolt had been scotched in most of the industrial centres of Spain. In more than one locality, the triumph of the fascists was due to the refusal of the Republican civil authorities to open the arsenals to the workers even after the outbreak of the revolt.

## The Spanish Labor Movement

Anarchism was the first form that the Spanish revolutionary movement assumed when it came into being during the period of the First International. No other ideology could fit in so well with the blind revolts of the agricultural proletariat of Andalusia and the first gropings of the young working class in the small-scale Catalan industry of the period. The cringing class-collaborationism of Spanish "Marxism" contributed generously to the later survival of anarchism as a mass movement in Spain. The CNT was formed in 1911 in opposition to the reformist trade union, the UGT. The



FAI, the political nucleus that controls the CNT, came into being a decade ago. Anarchism with its blustering dismissal of the question of state power could do no more than lead the masses up a blind alley. Periodically Spanish anarchism, faced with revolutionary crises, has sputtered in futile heroics and, its impotence revealed, has undergone a sorry deflation. It was so in 1919, in 1923, and again in 1933. Only the absence of a revolutionary Marxist party has each time permitted the cycle to be renewed. During the first two years of the republic, while the reformists were engaged in strangling the revolution from their ministerial posts, the anarchists in a series of improvised adventures, dissipated the revolutionary energies of the workers and left the way wide open for the comeback of reaction.

On the outbreak of the fascist revolt the anarchists had the immense majority of the working class of Catalonia, Aragon, Valencia, Andalusia and Murcia behind them, and were making rapid inroads among the Madrid proletariat.

The Spanish Socialist Party, founded by Pablo Iglesias in the last century, derived its arch-reformist outlook from the prejudices of the handicraft and small industrial workers of bureaucratic Madrid, in whom it found its principal support. Traditionally it lent itself for use by the Government as a tool against the revolutionary anarchists. During the Rivera dictatorship it participated through the person of Largo Caballero and others in the Government Council and took an enthusiastic hand in drafting the decrees that outlawed the rest of the Spanish labor movement.

During the previous few years the party had been rent by a fractional conflict.

The negligible right wing led by Julian Besteiro, after the experiences of the first two years of the Republic, advocated, with quaint cunning, abstention from governmental coalitions to safeguard reformism from discredit.

The Centre headed by Indalecio Prieto and Gonzalez Pena was of classically reformist complexion and avoided scrupulously truck or trade with the notion of proletarian revolution. Paradoxically enough it retained its main centre of influence among the Asturian miners and the Basque heavy industry workers. The left wing of Caballero, these workers regarded as traitors for having failed to support their struggle in October, 1934, with an insurrection in Madrid. Men like Pena have shown themselves quite capable of the greatest barricade heroics provided that the purpose be strictly curtailed to the defence of the bourgeois republic.

The "lefts" of Caballero centred in Madrid. After a banal ministerial role during the first period of the Republic, Caballero was

suddenly visited by the spirit and evolved a most formidable clatter of revolutionary phraseology—which was promptly accepted as good currency by comfort-loving optimists throughout the world ("the Spanish Lenin"). With signal verve he declared for the proletarian dictatorship (with the Socialist party playing the role of Soviets!). But when it came to providing leadership to the magnificent general strikes that rocked Madrid on the eve of the insurrection, he was in no way to be had. These were conducted by the CNT which consequently made amazing inroads among the Madrid proletariat among whom they had traditionally been weak to the point of virtual non-existence. Within the SP Caballero espoused the cause of organizational unity with the Communist Party. During the first months of the war Caballero served as willing catspaw of the Communist Party. The national UGT trade unions stood under the influence of the Caballero wing of the SP.

The United Socialist Youth (JSU) had been formed as the result of the fusion of the Socialist Youth with the Communist Youth organization, on the only basis upon which such fusions are possible—complete absorption by Stalinism. At its convention in January, 1937, it was heatedly denied that an acceptance of the principles of Socialism was necessary for membership in the organization. For that the sole prerequisite was the love of one's Fatherland—surely no bone that would stick in any fascist's throat. The leader of the JSU, Carillo, towards the end of 1934 had come out in favor of the Fourth International, but since had become one of the shrillest components in the chorus of the counter-revolution. Originally affiliated to the Young Communist International, the JSU disaffiliated to assure itself a freer hand for manoeuvring within the Second International.

The outbreak of the 1931 revolution found the Spanish Communist Party a rickety uninfluential sect torn by fractional strife and pitching and tossing in the sectarian paroxysms of the "third period". Since the splitting away of almost the entire Catalan section under Maurin, the party had not been able to regain a serious footing among the Catalan working class. Dismissing any sort of united front with the other organizations of the working class, splitting little splinters away from the trade unions in its "unity" efforts, the CP spent the first two years of the republic shouting wildly for a Soviet regime while doing everything in its limited power to sabotage the coming into being of soviets. In 1934, the new winds that blew from Moscow reached Spain and soon the Communist Party was up to the neck in the treacherous muck of the Popular Front.

The United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) was formed about the time of the insurrection as a result of the merger of four

minute reformist parties including the Catalan sections of the Spanish Socialist and Communist Parties. Backed by the full weight of Soviet diplomacy, and thanks to its aggressive stand as the most uncompromising spokesman of the counter-revolution, it swiftly gained the dominant position among the Catalan middle-class. In the course of the war entire branches of the bourgeois liberal Esquerra went over to it. Many sections of the Communist International, the nucleus of whose proletarian following dates back to a period when the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism had not yet blossomed forth in full explicitness, remained, for all their reactionary policies, essentially proletarian in composition. Such is notably the case of the French Communist Party and even, in a decidedly limited sense, of the Communist Party of Spain. But the PSUC grew from insignificance in the midst of a revolution. Its following was recruited exclusively on the basis of its undisguisedly counter-revolutionary program and deeds. The result has been an organization that in composition as well as in policy has constituted the chosen shock troops of the counter-revolution in Catalonia.

The ranks of the Catalan UGT, a negligible force on the eve of the insurrection, swelled precipitously as backward unorganized layers of the working class (waiters, etc.), faced with the need of becoming unionized after the revolution, chose unhesitatingly the traditionally reformist centre. In addition the Stalinites obtained the affiliation *en masse* to the UGT in Catalonia of their new political clientele—organized in merchants' and employers' syndicates. Within the organization the Stalinites maintained an iron bureaucratic regime, suppressing all meetings of the membership, organizing mass expulsions of the left wing militants, employing the union as a football in the political game of the PSUC. Former employers and foremen and the *cacique* (feudal boss) elements in the village, hounded old working class militants that had earned their hatred by their revolutionary activities under the old regime.

The Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (POUM) was formed as a result of the merger of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc of Maurin and the Spanish Trotsky group which had broken with Trotsky on refusing to accept his advice to liquidate themselves into the SP—"the traditional party of the Spanish proletariat". The basis of the fusion was inadequate from the revolutionary point of view leaving loopholes for conciliationism towards Stalinism. But for all its centrist weaknesses (reflected in its choice of international allies, the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity—a babel-tongued den of confusionism that could give the party anything but the necessary revolutionary support) it was only from the ranks

of POUM that could come the Marxist nucleus for the building of a revolutionary party in Spain during the present revolution. Hence the need for revolutionaries outside of Spain to have supported the party in a constructively critical manner.

Trotsky, smarting under the refusal of the POUM to seek salvation within the bosom of the Socialist Party according to his most recent and favourite recipe, outdid himself in petulant exaggeration and bickering against the party instead of offering a positive criticism of its errors that should have strengthened the left tendencies and assisted their differentiation from the right wing. The temporary adhesion of the POUM to the electoral pact of the Popular Front of February, 1936, was enough for him to dismiss the party as an irretrievably damned band of traitors. It was this grotesque fishwifery on the part of the Trotskyites that played into the hands of the right wing of POUM and presented them with the desired scarecrow for their struggle against the lefts. Having slammed all the doors that opened upon channels of positive work in Spain, the Trotskyites sought diversion in the comic opera enterprise of a Spanish Bolshevik-Leninist section consisting of a score of rootless but self-important immigrants.

The POUM was a real strength only in Catalonia. It claimed some 40,000 members after the insurrection. Although the general political level of its membership was low, it comprised some of the most devoted forces of the Spanish proletariat. Nine-tenths of its Madrid membership of before July fell at Sigüenza and the other fronts around Madrid. The absence of its leader, Maurin (imprisoned by the Fascists since the outbreak of the war), might possibly account for the pitiful political wobbling of the POUM during the Revolution.

In the February elections POUM had affixed its signature to the scandalous Popular Front manifesto cited above, in order to participate in the common electoral lists. It broke with the Popular Front, however, immediately after. POUM was a "soft" party—of "soft" principles and "soft" leaders. Enticed into the bourgeois Generality "in order not to isolate itself", it travelled forevermore the primrose path of ease and convenience that led it straight to the firing squad of the Stalinite counter-revolution. In the distilled abstract its position was for the proletarian revolution in Spain. In practice it found it easier to cling to the skirts of the leadership of the CNT and tail them in all their capitulations rather than go to the masses to make its positions prevail. To do the latter should have required clear principles and an iron will. The leadership of POUM had neither.

The Federacion Obrera de Unidad Sindical was a trade union centre standing under the influence of the POUM. It had been formed shortly before July by independent unions that for the greater part had come from the CNT. After the insurrection it liquidated into the Catalan UGT with the optimistic perspective on the part of the POUM of capturing the Catalan UGT in a short

period. It did not enter the CNT, where the vast majority of the revolutionary proletariat of Catalonia was to be found, because the POUM leadership wished to avoid carrying on very necessary fractional work against the CNT leaders.

## The Old State Collapses

The bourgeois statesmen, under whose indulgent noses the conspiracy had taken form, quite naturally were not galvanized into more heroic conduct by the outbreak of the insurrection. Nor is their behaviour to be traced to personal cowardice or ineptitude. This would be as insipid as to brand the insurgent generals as traitors—a practice that offers endless consolation to the luminaries of the Popular Front. There are loyalties that run far deeper than any commanded by oath that magistrate can administer. And the interests of the propertied classes demanded blundering tortuousness from its Liberal politicians, and ruthless brutality from its generals.

One half of the bourgeois standard-bearers of the Popular Front slipped deftly away to France to await the Fascist taming of the Red Beast; the other half remained dutifully behind to parley capitulation with the Fascist military.

Directly upon the heels of the insurrection came the resignation of the Quiroga cabinet to make place for one of a more reactionary complexion presided over by Martínez Barrios. The sole action of this ministry was to communicate a proposal for compromise to the Fascist generals. But the situation had already slipped out of the hands of the Madrid government into those of the workers. Unbalanced by the defection of its armed forces, the essence of any state, the bourgeois government was brushed to the sidelines by the workers' committees, into whose hands became concentrated the actual power. Cabinet after cabinet followed one another in Madrid and Barcelona without producing as much as a dent upon the real course of events. It was only later when the workers' leaders liquidated the embryonic proletarian state forms to enter the bourgeois cabinets that the old state was able to regain a precarious equilibrium and initiate the counter-revolution by the methods of infiltration.

The mere map of the civil war provides a pithy indictment of the responsibilities of the Popular Front government in levelling the way for the Fascist insurrection. Franco was able to use Morocco as his base and the Riff legions as his shock troops against the Republic only because the Republic and its predecessor, the Mon-

archy, had been indistinguishable for the colonial masses—the same brutal oppression even down to the most casual details of personnel. On the Iberian peninsula the original territory under Franco's control consisted for the most part of backward agrarian regions where feudal exploitation flourished in its most unvarnished form. But instead of driving the wedge of agrarian revolution between the reactionary feudalists and the peasant masses, the Popular Front forced the latter into indifference by its ardor in maintaining intact the estates of their overlords.

Nor was the Popular Front chastened by the experience of the revolt. In the early days of the civil war a delegation of Moroccan nationalist leaders arrived in Barcelona with the offer to raise Spanish Morocco against Franco if the Republic would guarantee its independence after the war. They had already obtained the assent of the Catalan workers' organizations when the Madrid government intervened to veto the agreement. How, after all, would Britain view such a surrender of the territory alongside the straits of Gibraltar—whose possession by a weak European power is one of the cardinal points of British Mediterranean policy? And how should French imperialism regard another revolt of the dreaded Riffs which would certainly not come to a gingerly halt at the border of French Morocco? And since when had even Republican bourgeois hearts ceased to throb at the thought of the Riff iron mines?

Once the military rebellion had been crushed in Barcelona and the other centres of Catalonia and Valencia, the workers turned their attention elsewhere. Volunteer militias were hastily organized, equipped with the armament taken from the rebels, supplemented with a few dubious armored vehicles improvised in the factories and sent off to reclaim Zaragoza and Huesca from the Fascists. In Barcelona itself and in the other cities the workers organized the cleansing of the towns of fascist and notoriously reactionary elements. If the methods at times might have been a little thorough, then that must be put to the account of the bourgeoisie and their butchers, who had done little to instruct the workers in the winsome virtues of humanitarianism. The Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias was established, with the representation of all the anti-fascist organizations, and soon assumed all the functions that had been the monopoly of the bourgeois state. Workers' patrols were set up, constituted by quotas of militants from the various anti-fascist organizations, and these took over the policing of the cities. The responsibility for the provisioning of the cities and the maintenance of the essential public services rested with the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias.

## Revolution Despite Leaders

Yet none of the left wing organizations as much as dreamed that they stood in the midst of a proletarian revolution. *Solidaridad Obrera* (the Catalan organ of the CNT) foreshadowed its future role by denouncing the continuation of the strike for the improvement of workers' conditions. Such demands must wait until the anti-fascist struggle is won! *Avant* (the then Catalan organ of POUM) was able inexpensively to maintain its reputation as the extreme left workers' journal by demanding that the strike be continued for the following demands—a ten per cent. increase in wages, the confiscation of the property of those participating in the revolt, the abolition of rents and dues in the countryside, etc. Not a whisper about a proletarian revolution. There could be no more fitting commentary on the character of these demands than the fact that the Generality itself granted the workers not the ten per cent. increase demanded by *Avant*, but a 15 per cent. raise . . . and was soon to grant much, much more in an effort to prevent its being altogether swept away by the overwhelming flood of revolution. Far from entertaining ideas about doing away with the bourgeois state when it was reduced to an ineffectual shell, *Avant* cried for the granting by the Generality of pensions to the relatives of the anti-fascist victims of the rebellion, and gloatingly expressed its satisfaction when this was achieved. After years of repetition of the abstract formula that the coming revolution would be a proletarian revolution, the leaders of POUM were unable to recognize it when it alit squarely in front of their noses.

But here again the sound instinct of the workers intervened to compensate for the lack of revolutionary leadership. After years of brutal oppression at the hands of republican and monarchical governments alike, they were not misled by the abstractions of the Anti-Fascist Front, but hastened to exploit the discomfiture of their real enemy—the capitalist and land-owning classes. Towards the end of August there appeared the modest announcement in the Barcelona press that the workers of the Water Company had collectivized their industry and ousted its former owners. Instances of expropriations and collectivizations multiplied both in the towns and in the countryside until the old property relations had been swept away. Only then did the workers' organizations, dragged along in the tow of events, finally pay a belated tribute to the reality that was unfolding itself before their eyes. They set up a subordinate committee of the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias, the Economic Council, that endeavoured to direct the economic activity of the collectivized industries. This Council promptly proceeded to

subordinate itself to the Generality that was in the process of gasping its last.

Even after they had been forced into the realization that the revolution was upon them, the workers' organizations did little more. The dominating tendency among the Catalan workers was the anarchist CNT-FAI. But anarchist theory excluded beforehand the establishment of a workers' state. "Politics? Let Companys concern himself with that." Which of course he did only too well. Zealots of the "principle" of decentralization, it was thoroughly sufficient in their eyes that the workers of the individual factories should establish their collective control over their plant without worrying unduly about coordination and centralization. The banks were left untouched. The Generality was engaged in plastering its confiscation notices on most of the banks merely in order to prevent the workers from carrying out the confiscation in earnest.

Before the overpowering surge of revolution, even the bourgeois parties scamped to take cover under a proletarian revolutionary terminology. The *Esquerra*, party of the left bourgeoisie, and the PSUC, section of the Communist International (that abroad and elsewhere in Spain was combatting frenziedly the idea of a proletarian revolution) vied with each other in their revolutionary pretensions. For lip-service to the workers' revolution had become a prerequisite for the playing of any political role whatsoever in Catalonia. All the more lamentable was the touching faith which the leaders of the CNT and the POUM reposed in the newly-hatched revolutionary professions of the PSUC and the *Esquerra*. The writer has a vivid recollection of the unfortunate Nin last October emphatically protesting the genuineness of the unexpected conversion of Companys—"he has realized that capitalism is finished".

Elsewhere in Spain, due to the far greater influence of the Stalinite and reformist machines, the bourgeois state was rattled to a decidedly lesser degree. In the Basque country where the workers had begun by taking over the factories as in Catalonia, the Basque Nationalists were soon about to resume their control of the situation with the aid of the Socialist and Communist parties. The Regional Committee of the CNT was imprisoned, the anarchist printing shops confiscated and handed over to the Communist Party, the factories taken away from the workers.

## Problems of State Power

The workers' militias who left the centres where fascism had been crushed to meet the enemy elsewhere, achieved prodigies of heroism. Pitifully armed and often ignorant of the most elementary

principles of warfare, they frequently more than made good these handicaps with a morale that did not shrink before the certainty of physical annihilation to achieve its ends. In the early days of war, when it still took more or less the form of irregular, guerrilla struggle, this *elan* and spirit of sacrifice sufficed to sweep away all before it. But as time went on the struggle acquired more and more the traits of modern regular warfare. The enemy had at their disposal not only vastly superior war material, but also, having taken over the greater part of the army and almost the entire officers cadres, a more expert organization and leadership. In the workers' camp the militias of the various organizations acted in almost complete independence. There was virtually a total lack of general staff work. Too frequently it happened that military operations would be interrupted while the various party militias quarrelled violently over the allotment of the glory of taking a position from the fascists. Groups of anarchists whose devotion far outran their discretion boasted that they were always to be found one dozen yards ahead of the front line.

It soon became apparent to all that the revolution had to learn and apply the methods of modern military science. Marx spoke of insurrection as an art. Civil war that compounds the political issues of revolution with the perplexing problems of modern warfare is still less a matter to be trifled with. Discipline and coordination were required to back up the splendid but often futile sacrifices of the militias. From all sides arose the cry for the establishment of a single unified command, the *mando unico*.

But the establishment of a unified command was not only a technical problem, but pre-eminently a political one. For the single command could be concentrated either in the hands of the working class or of the old bourgeois state. To establish an effective proletarian unified command it should have been necessary to replace the Central Committee of Anti-fascist Militias with new bodies, workers', peasants' and soldiers' committees suitable to function as the new proletarian state apparatus. The CNT and the POUM chose the line of least resistance and found in the need for a unified command a superb pretext for entering the bourgeois Generality.

Every revolution throws up organizational forms through which the newly-awakened creative power of the masses find expression, and which ultimately replace the old state. The Russian Revolution exemplifies this in classic form. The Soviets, that in 1905 had directed the gigantic strikes and organized the Moscow insurrection, reappeared once more on the outbreak of the revolution of February, 1917, and became the frame-work within which the working class lived its intense experiences and ripened for the seizure of power.

Based on the representation of all the workers in the factories, it constituted a manner of parliament of the proletariat within which its various political sections strove for hegemony. It was the embryonic form of the new revolutionary state apparatus that had begun to develop long before the working class had come to realize the need for overthrowing the old state. It is this period of co-existence of two essentially hostile apparatuses of power (dual power) that constitutes an inevitable phase of every revolution.

Special characteristics of the Spanish labor movement impeded the creation of suitable organs of workers' power. Before the revolution, the Russian working class, compelled to work under conditions of the severest illegality, had not succeeded in forming trade unions of more than the most fragmentary and ephemeral sort. The Spanish working class long before the July events already had its powerful trade union bodies, each with a distinct tradition and political orientation. This very superiority of the Spanish workers' movement resulted, paradoxically enough, in the gravest difficulties for the course of the revolution. For the flood of proletarian energies unleashed by the revolution flowed naturally within the channels of the deeply enrooted trade union centres. But yet there did arise organizational forms designed to meet the needs of the revolution. These were the anti-fascist militia committees into whose hands, once the insurrection had been crushed in Catalonia, became concentrated the functions of state power (organization of the militias, provisioning, policing, production, control of frontiers, etc.). But these suffered from grave weaknesses. Instead of basing themselves upon the broad democracy of the workers in the factories (unity from the base) they were put together by the various anti-fascist organizations from the top. They constituted, indeed, nothing more than a liaison committee of the diverse organizations and were unable fully to bridge the mutual rivalries and jealousies. The consequence was a woeful lack of co-ordination. It was this that provided an all too plausible pretext for the left wing organizations establishing anti-fascist unity . . . within the framework of the bourgeois Generality.

### The POUM and CNT Enter the Generality

Towards the middle of August the PSUC had already attempted to do its bit to bolster up the decrepit Generality by sending its representatives into the Cabinet. But such was the indignation of the other workers' organizations that it was at once forced to withdraw. By the end of September, however, we find both the Anarchists and the POUM sufficiently weaned away from such scruples to

liquidate the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias and to enter the cabinet of Taradellas, in which all anti-fascist parties participated.

Anarchist theory has always presented the socialist transformation of society as an apocalyptic descent of something full-blown upon a deserving mankind. Once the bourgeois state were overthrown society could at once step into the classless stage without there being need or justification for the organization of a temporary working class dictatorship to cope with the economic and political problems of the transition period. Hence the traditional "apoliticalism" of the anarchists—their indignant denial that the workers must take over power. Far rather, according to anarchist views, had they to destroy all state power once and for always. But such views, though they can be cheerfully upheld during normal non-revolutionary times, do not survive when confronted with a revolutionary crisis. Thus it was with the CNT-FAI in Spain. Overwhelmed by an avalanche of problems of a military and economic nature raised by the war, they found that their "apolitical" pretensions were untenable, that a state apparatus was needed to deal with these matters. Hence they crawled into the bourgeois governments of Catalonia and Madrid, left standing only due to their indulgence during their previous "apolitical" period. With politics, indeed, they were compelled to occupy themselves. What is to be regretted is that they chose the bourgeois brand. Of their apolitical pretences there remained as a wistful reminder only the rebaptism of the Government of the Generality into the Council of Generality carried out to spare their sensitivities.

It is maintained, of course, that the special conditions of the war made the abandonment of their doctrines inevitable. But the circumstances surrounding the Spanish civil war are by no means exceptional. Only idle babblers could have envisaged the overthrow of the bourgeoisie under any other form than as a bloody civil war, built around the clash of violently divergent interests, with the intervention of world reaction. It was from the certainty of this that Marxists deduced the need for an iron dictatorship of the proletariat in order to organize the civil war and the construction of socialism, a state that would dwindle only as the economic roots of the class struggle were eliminated.

The anarchist ministers even acquired the habit of vaunting their renegacy by referring to their abandonment of their principles as a special sacrifice in the interest of the anti-fascist cause and calling upon the bourgeoisie to display a similar altruism. Revolutionary principles, however, should not be absolute ethical truths abstracted from an over-contemplated navel. They must be a code of action formulated on the basis of the earthly experiences of the proletariat capable precisely of equipping it for victory in time of crisis. But what are we to think of "principles" whose only use in the midst of revolution is to serve as sacrificial fauna in the name of a collaboration with the bourgeoisie which becomes the only possible improvised "solution"?

The POUM applied balm to its conscience by pointing to the "socialist" program of the Generality and to the majority of working class representatives in it. The socialist program, we shall see later, represented nothing more than a pitiful limping after the revolutionary conquests of the workers, an attempt to fit them into the channels of the old state, in order to liquidate them once the bourgeoisie had gained sufficient firm ground under its feet. The boisterous socialist phraseology current in every political camp in

Catalonia, we have already seen to be the merest daubs of camouflage. It is true that the Generality took over many of the bodies created by the Anti-Fascist Military Committee—Economic Council, Workers' Patrols, etc. But this was imposed upon it as a temporary measure by the need of replacing a good portion of its own apparatus that had fallen apart, and in order to assimilate and make innocuous what were potentially organs of proletarian power. This was much after the fashion in which the social-democrats inscribed the German Soviets (*Arbeiterräte*) into the Weimar Constitution. The Popular tribunals created by Nin from his post as Minister of Justice were nothing but window-dressing—as useful to POUM to justify its governmental participation as to the counter-revolution to achieve its long-range perspectives. Without an apparatus of proletarian force behind them the best of "revolutionary" tribunals could have no permanence. And this Nin was soon to learn when he later became one of the first to sip the bitter draught of the new republican justice—assassinated by the bloodhounds of the GPU.

The majority working class composition of the Government was equally meaningless, even if one leaves aside the fact that the POUM, in order to arrive at this majority, included the representatives of the counter-revolutionary PSUC and the UGT which were the most embittered opponents of the social revolution in the Catalan political arena. The POUM in its inexpensive enthusiasms considered the Generality Governments as a transitional "workers' and peasants' government" and even as the specific Spanish form of the proletarian dictatorship. But what was decisive was that the Generality based itself on what was left of the old bourgeois state.

Marxists regard the capitalist state in its essence as an apparatus of violence, the permanent cadres of which have been hand-picked to serve the capitalist class. It has a deep-seated loyalty towards the old society that survives the vicissitudes of elections and portfolio reshufflings. Crowned with a cabinet of socialist ministers, rebaptised "workers' and peasants' government" it nevertheless continues to utilize the enormous power concentrated in its hands to work for the consolidation of the old system. There can be no anti-capitalist government short of the liquidation of the old officialdom and the constitution of a new apparatus selected on the basis of criteria that will ensure its devotion to the socialist revolution. This is the proletarian dictatorship based on workers' and peasants' councils. Intermediate governments—Communist-Socialist cabinets reposing on the old corps of permanent officials can only cloak a subtle manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie to regain its lost positions.

## The Generality Legislates – Collectivisation

The decree on collectivisation adopted by the Generality in October provided a begrudging juridical sanction for the taking over of the factories by the workers. Factories employing 100 workers and over were compulsorily to be collectivised; those with from 50-75 workers required a vote of 75% of the workers in the plant; factories of under 50 could be collectivised only with the consent of the owner. Given the mediocre scale on which Catalan industry is organized, one sees at once in this the formula for the rescue of the establishments of the clientele of the *Esquerra*—the smaller bourgeoisie. The law proceeded to provide for compensation in the case of foreign interests and “savings” banks (the celebrated widows and orphans behind whom J. P. Morgan habitually hides?). In a portentously equivocal passage regarding native capitalists, the matter of compensation is really left wide open. In addition the interests of the powerful Basque banking interests were respected with reverence (“heroic anti-fascists of Euskadi”). For the moment, however, clever lawyers’ formulae did not suffice. The loopholes were intended for later use when the bourgeoisie would have recuperated sufficient force to back their “legal” case. Committees for the centralization and planning of industry were also provided for, but in actual practice these remained largely ineffectual since credits and orders were too valuable a political weapon to be subordinated to mere economic and military considerations.

There appeared at the same time an ominous little decree reprinted in all the Barcelona press, for the most part without comment, demanding the surrender of all large arms to the authorities under the penalty of being treated as a fascist.

The bourgeoisie was making its first feeble attempt to gather back into its own hands the monopoly of arms that had escaped it. The left workers’ organizations at the time were too intoxicated with their new ministerial portfolios to oppose it with as much as a gesture.

The form which the workers’ possession of industry and transport assumed was almost invariably that of collectivisation or syndicalisation. Under the former arrangement it was the workers in a given factory who came into the ownership of it and divided its net earnings as salaries. In the latter case it was the trade union as such that took over all the factories of a given industry and distributed the net earnings among the workers throughout the line. That these forms rather than socialisation came into vogue attests in the first place the improvised unco-ordinated manner in which industry was taken over, depending upon the spontaneous

initiative of the masses rather than upon the leadership of any given organization. But it harmonised well, too, with the local autonomy romantics of the anarchists, and the syndicalist notions that were current in the CNT.

Collectivisation (group ownership) is a progressive and necessary economic form where it serves as a transitional step in the integration of a backward, atomised branch of production into a socialist economy. Such is notably the case among small peasant proprietors. But applied to large scale industry, where there are no private property prejudices of an individual producer to circumvent, the system is thoroughly without reason.

So long, of course, as the state continued in the hands of the bourgeoisie, it was impossible even to pose the question of the nationalisation of the factories except as the counter-revolutionary expropriation of the workers by the old state which would at a later date hand the factories over to their old owners.

The consequences of the system were nonetheless often disastrous. Since the earnings of the workers were proportional to the net gains of the particular factory in which he was employed, there resulted an ugly cleft between the wages of the workers in the prosperous lines and those in the depressed industries. This made it extremely difficult to prune and reorganize industry in accordance with the needs of the war. There tended to become established a manner of vested interest among the workers of a given factory, who naturally defended the production of their enterprise to the utmost regardless of its utility in the war. There arose too, a helter-skelter scramble for raw materials, accentuated by the war scarcity that could only have been eliminated by a planned socialist economy. With the banks remaining in private hands, Catalan economy remained basically at the mercy of the laws of capitalist production skilfully manipulated by a counter-revolutionary government and a counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

But as inadequate as the collectivisation of the factories might have been from the point of view of socialism, in contrast to the proposed nationalisation or municipalisation in the hands of the bourgeois state, the mere physical possession of industry by the proletariat was something worth being defended with rifle in hand. As could have been foreseen, the counter-revolution at a later date, in its efforts to regain control of the factories, cleverly exploited the economic insufficiencies of the collectivisations in order to propose the “municipalisation” of industry. The bourgeoisie and their Stalinite lickspittles, however, had not hit upon the idea of municipalisation of commerce as a remedy for the blood-sucking speculation of the merchants.

## Spain—Arena of Imperialist Rivalry

From the first the Spanish civil war bore the combined character of a class war and a war of imperialist rivalry. The coup of July was not only the desperate effort of the Spanish ruling classes to wipe out the workers' movement, but was directed and sustained by Berlin and Rome in the hope of enrooting themselves in the Iberian peninsula. For Italian capitalism Spain holds the key to its dreams of supremacy in the Mediterranean. To Hitler it is the means of forcing an encircled France to treat for terms and permit him to carry on his war against Russia unhampered. To both it is the source of fabulous wealth of raw materials essential to their heavy industry and armament programs. France and Britain were correspondingly interested in the maintenance of the *status quo ante* July, 1936. But as long as the threat of working class revolution exists in Spain, there can be no divided loyalties in the imperialist camp. A bourgeois republican government at Valencia could receive the earnest support of the French-British capitalist group only if they had the assurance that tomorrow this government would not be overwhelmed by the proletarian revolution. It has not been the intentions of the Loyalist Governments to date that the Western Imperialist powers have questioned. The Loyalist Government has subordinated itself to, and even anticipated, every wish of Britain and France. What has been open to doubt has been its ability to carry out these best of intentions. The imperialist powers have had seared too deeply into their memories the Russian Revolution and its repercussions throughout the world to trifle with such matters. To meet the threat, Mussolini and Hitler stepped forward with their shipment of armaments and troops to Franco. The "democratic" powers intervened under the specific form of "non-intervention".

It was on the initiative of Stalin and Blum that the Spanish Republic was deprived of its incontestable right to purchase arms and ammunition abroad. This was a flagrant breach of international law, the *de facto* treatment of Franco on a footing of equality with the Government. But then for the imperialist powers the cant of international jurisprudence is yarn spun in order to entangle one's opponents, and not to get unduly wrapped up in oneself. The withholding of arms from the workers of Spain prevented an immediate victory of the workers long before the Loyalist bourgeoisie had recovered its balance. But this was the goal sought by the "democratic" powers; and they have ample occasion to congratulate themselves on their degree of success.

Germany and Italy are unencumbered by far-flung and vulnerable colonial possessions. Their roles as undisguised hangmen of the revolution happily coincide with the higher salutary interests of imperialism as a whole. They are consequently able to deploy a reckless mobility in manoeuvre and blackmail that contrasts with the ponderous movements of the "democratic" imperialist powers, bowed under by the very burden of their booty. Hence the brilliant hand played by Germany and Italy—the hide-and-seek around conference tables, the cynical dallying for time, the hailstorm of *faits accomplis*.

But the outlook for Britain and France is far from forlorn. In their accumulated plunder of the past they have immense reserves from which to make minor concessions. They can bring to bear the high-monopoly of financial resources to make their most vital interests prevail. In Spain, the cherished solution of the British and French bourgeoisie is a conciliation of the two sides established on the bones of the revolutionary movement. Towards this end a certain equilibrium between the two warring camps must be maintained. This will prevent the immediate and outright victory of Franco, which would leave him too pliable a creature of Italy. It will insure that Spain will be left sufficiently devastated at the end of a protracted war to be dependent on the wholesale aid of British finance-capital, and correspondingly respectful of its wishes.

This is the armistice program, the first trial balloon for which was sent up by Winston Churchill in the House of Commons last December and since espoused in ever-mounting chorus by the "democratic" powers with the complicity of the Soviet Government and Valencia. Every defeat of the Spanish working class is but a further preparatory step for its realization.

To some it might appear a troubling paradox that Soviet Russia, descended from the October revolution, should participate in the strangling of the proletarian revolution elsewhere. But Stalin, who is engaged in exterminating a whole generation of Russian revolutionaries, and in liquidating the institutions of the proletarian dictatorship in the interests of the new privileged strata of Soviet society, must intervene to stifle the proletarian revolt elsewhere. A successful revolution anywhere in the world must mean the end of the pulpit-like submissiveness of the Soviet workers and sound the death-knell of the Stalin regime. Since Hitler has taken as his motif a fictitious lust of Moscow after world revolution, Stalin's effort to exculpate himself before the bourgeois diplomats have reached the height of frenzy. The wholesale massacre of the old revolutionaries within the USSR is accompanied by the brazen intervention of the Communist International as the hangman of counter-revolution throughout the world. But Stalin's labour of love goes cruelly unrequited. He may well court Hitler, provision Mussolini's war against Abyssinia with oil, and promise to provision his next war, should it be against Germany, with Italian Communist cannon-fodder (the theory of the better and worse Fascisms whose career was brusquely cut with the formation of the Berlin-Rome axis).



But in the end, as the international working class movement becomes weakened and demoralized through its subordination to the bankrupt Liberal parties of capitalism, the world bourgeoisie shows a greater unanimity to permit Hitler to restore one-sixth of the earth's surface to the sadly shrunken capitalist world market. The crux of the matter is that the international bourgeoisie has a far keener appreciation of the class realities of the contemporary world than the "Marxists" of the Third International. And hence the unending diplomatic triumphs of Litvinov inevitably end with the breeches of the Moscow bureaucracy flying merrily in the breeze at half-mast.

It was the Russian arms that saved Madrid. The badly equipped militias that had retreated in full route from Toledo and Talavera, suddenly, at the very gates of Madrid, found themselves supported by artillery and aviation and for the first time in two months were able to meet the fascists under reasonable conditions. Stalin, after having placed his faith in bourgeois diplomacy to re-establish the status quo, eventually realized that the policy of the diplomats would bring Franco to Madrid. But then, the entire structure of alliances that Soviet diplomacy had exerted itself to build, would collapse. To keep Hitler from Moscow, his hand was forced to prevent Franco from entering Madrid. The decisive effect of the first shipments of Russian arms, however, serves to underline how easy should have been the victory of the Spanish proletariat if they had not been deprived of arms in the first place by Stalin, Blum and Co. Russian arms have come to Spain in measured quantities to prevent the victory of Franco rather than to make possible a "premature" Loyalist triumph with its attendant prospect of proletarian revolution.

But the story did not end here. With the arms came the ultimatum that "Lenin's best disciple" would under no circumstances tolerate the workers seizing power—that the struggle had to be confined within the bounds of the bourgeois republic. The arms (paid for in advance on a strictly cash basis) became the means whereby Stalin was able to perpetrate blackmail on the basis of the mortal distress of the Spanish proletariat.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the beginning of December all the Barcelona papers published a virulent attack against the POUM of the Russian Consul at Barcelona, Antonov-Ovseenko\*, a former Trotskyite operating with a fully understandable zeal. The party was labelled as fascist and hostile to the USSR. The reply of POUM was suppressed in all but

\*But alas!—Stalin is a god of wrath and vengeance in whose eyes no degree of zeal will wash away the original sin of having participated in the leadership of the October Revolution. Ovseenko was later enticed back to Russia with the position of Commissar of Justice as bait—a post that he held some three weeks. Since his dismissal Ovseenko has apparently entered into an altogether different relationship with Soviet Justice.

its own press. This provided the artillery barrage under the cover of which the PSUC commenced its offensive to oust the POUM from the Generality. The PSUC demanded in addition the liquidation of the workers' patrols that policed Barcelona, the establishment of the Regular Army, and the setting up of a "strong" government as the conditions for its further participation in the Generality. For a while the CNT ventured a timid defence of POUM and one of those grandiloquent poses of intransigence that invariably presaged its capitulation to reaction. But finally it accepted a solution that excluded alike the representatives of the POUM and the PSUC. The PSUC ministers of course re-entered at once as representatives of the UGT, mechanically controlled by the Stalinites. But the head of the CNT leadership had been turned too much by the stroking of their anti-political prejudice ("a purely trade union representation of the working class") and the additional ministry allotted them, to enquire too searchingly after the real significance of the arrangement.

Throughout the crisis preceding their ejection, the POUM leadership carefully avoided re-estimating the true role of the Generality and the consequences of its participation in it. They were content to brandish the hollow and dubious threat, "it is impossible to govern without us in Catalonia." But in reality, if it was true that the bourgeoisie had required the participation in the Generality of the POUM in order to repair their shaken fortunes, the counter-revolution had since become sufficiently strong to dispense with it and advance to still bolder conquests.

## Bread—A Weapon of War

Although Spain in normal times is barely self-sufficient in wheat and an exporter of other agricultural products, the occupation of many of the principal agrarian districts by the fascists gave rise to an acute food and particularly bread shortage in Loyalist Spain. But what was to begin with a grave problem was accentuated manifold by the play of the counter-revolution. Bread became a weapon with which to batter the Catalan working classes into an acceptance of the demands of reaction. The Russian wheat boats developed a one-sided habit of calling at Valencia, Malaga, and Alicante, but avoiding Barcelona. Even Madrid with its formidable difficulties of transportation was far better provisioned with bread last winter than Barcelona. Wheat purchased from the Soviet Union and paid for in the customary cash by the Catalan Government was delayed two months in coming. The Catalan bourgeoisie pursuing an en-

lightened self-interest, availed themselves of the shortage, to screw up the food prices to unheard-of levels in an orgy of speculation. For this they were afforded every latitude and connivance by their political representatives, the PSUC and the Esquerra within the Generality.

Domenech, the CNT Minister of Provisions in the Generality until December, in a statement to the press revealed that before his departure from that post, he had already completed the plans and organization of a system of rationing. His successor, the PSUC leader Comorera, deliberately delayed the introduction of rationing for a further three months in order to discredit the collectivization achievements of the workers and strike a telling blow in favor of the complete re-establishment of "free trade". The Stalinites attempted to heap the responsibility for the state of things upon the anarchist co-operatives.

While the high-priced food shops and restaurants frequented by the new bourgeoisie were crammed to capacity with every sort of luxury product, interminable queues for almost every necessity, bread, coal, oil, meat, tobacco, entered as a universal institution into the drab life of the proletariat. Working class housewives would line up the preceding night in the too frequently disappointed hope of obtaining a mite of bread or meat the next morning. Maximum prices set by the municipalities became a tattered fiction in the face of the arrogant offensive of the speculators. Coal and gasoline were being doled out by Russia with a niggardliness that contrasted with the generous scale of its shipments of fuel to Italy during the Abyssinian War. The acute famine of gasoline in the early months of 1937 constituted a most serious threat to the fronts, several of which were entirely dependent upon motor transport. During the first year of the war, de facto prices had well-nigh tripled, while workers' wages remained stationary since the 15% increase hastily conceded by the Generality on the morrow of the insurrection. While the bourgeoisie swilled and batted on the padded profits of inflation, the workers were crushed down into conditions of slow but sure starvation. Despite the fact that luxury industries were producing uninterruptedly, the PSUC raised the slogan, "Workers do not discuss your wages and working conditions". At the Congress of the PSUC held at the beginning of August, Comorera had the sublime cheek to attack the scandalously high wages of the building workers—18 pesetas a day in a seasonal industry—approximately the price of a package of Lucky Strike cigarettes so popular with the bourgeoisie of Barcelona.

## Revolution and Counter-Revolution at the Front

The entry of the working class organizations into the Generality and the institution of *Mando Unico* had established the formal dependence of the militias on the war office of the bourgeois state. But within the militias the proletarian organizations remained in control, appointing the officers and political commissars with an eye to their devotion to the cause of the revolution. Precisely this, however, incurred the displeasure of the bourgeoisie. Of the two wars that the propertied classes had thrust upon them, that against the fascists and that against the revolution in the rear, they unquestionably were prone to take the latter the more seriously. And for that it was necessary for them to replace the militias with a regular army—honeyedly dubbed "People's Army"—stripped of all revolutionary spirit and in which the absolute control rests in the hands of professional militarists of the old army. The revolutionaries in Spain had recognized the need to utilize the technical advice of the old officers that remained with the government (although it would be wrong to overestimate the value of the old Spanish military cadres—who like the entire Spanish bureaucracy are of a quite fantastic ineptitude and ignorance). But in a revolutionary army this would be done as it was done with the Czarist officers during the early days of the Soviet army, with the vigilance of a proletarian commissar ready to nip in the bud the first indications of treachery. But once freed from the surveillance of the revolutionary working class, the reactionary officers outdid themselves in betrayal. Many of these officers were the cronies of Franco and Mola whose "loyalty" consisted merely in their misfortune in having been found by the insurrection in territory where the victory of the workers was too obviously assured. The fall of Malaga was due to the treachery of the high command. The anti-aircraft guns were dismantled immediately before the murderous fascist bombardment. The general staff withdrew in disorderly retreat even before the fascist troops had reached the city. Between the Stalinites and the reactionary officers whom they favored as a dike against proletarian revolution, a touching division of labor came into effect. On those fronts where the workers' militias still retained control, it was the Stalinites who sabotaged. Elsewhere where the Popular Army had been happily introduced, the reactionary officers looked after the rest.

The strength of the workers' troops lay not primarily in the counter-posing of their military machine to that of the fascists, but in the shattering force of the revolutionary idea that they incarnated. In a civil war the enemy's troops can be disintegrated by propa-

ganda almost as often as crushed. But it was the purpose and effect of the bourgeois regular army to banish this very spirit of the revolution from the loyalist troops and reduce them to the passive cannon-fodder proper to bourgeois armies. With the institution of the Popular Army, political propaganda (read revolutionary propaganda), the use of the red flag and other working class insignia, and among the Catalan troops even the use of the Catalan language were forbidden. The military code of Alfonso XIII was reintroduced into the army. The few bright chapters in the generally dismal record of the Popular Army are almost invariably to be traced to instances where the government was unsuccessful in fully carrying out the elimination of the revolutionary influence among the troops. This was notably the case at the victory of Guadalajara achieved by the CNT militia under Cipriano Mera, rebaptized the 14th brigade of the Popular Army.

Had the left wing organizations availed themselves of the situation of August, 1936, to set up working class power, the problem of establishing a *revolutionary* regular army could have been posed. But with the bourgeois state preserved, the proletariat was faced with the immediate need of defending within the framework of the bourgeois state those of their positions that had not yet been liquidated. Without a proletarian state there could be no question of a proletarian regular army, but only of revolutionary militias under the control of the workers' organizations and of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils that had yet to be formed. The definitive solution of the military question, like that of every essential problem on the political and economic plane, was inextricably bound up with the seizure of political power by the working class.

\* \* \* \* \*

The front of Aragon was a front of immeasurable promise. Directly behind it lay Catalonia as an economic hinterland, the most populous and industrialized region of Spain. The initial push of the militias had brought them within fifteen kilometres of Zaragoza, fifth city in Spain and traditional stronghold of anarchism. Post-war military theory (e.g., the Englishman, Liddel Hart), basing itself on a critique of the colossal blunders of the Allied General Staffs in the Great War, teaches the need of seeking the enemy on the fronts other than where his main strength is concentrated—to turn his flank, as it were, in the strategical sense. Aragon offered an unexampled opportunity for doing this. Nothing would have been better designed to relieve the fronts of Madrid, where the enemy had gathered his best forces, than an attack on Aragon. Nothing was as imperative as to eliminate the dangerous corner of Teruel in

Aragon that presents a constant threat of Catalonia being cut off from the rest of Loyalist Spain. But Aragon remained for seven fatal months a front of inaction. The reason?

Aragon was the front primarily of the CNT and POUM militias that had not yet been bent under the yoke of the Popular Army. The council of Aragon under whose control would come any conquered territory was in the hands of the anarchists. Hence the Valencia government, intent upon carrying out the counter-revolution at no matter what price, conducted a shameful sabotage of military operations in Aragon, depriving the front of arms, munitions, and even provisions. The anarchist and POUM militias until the end of May were in the trenches practically with only the arms that they had seized from the fascists in Barcelona the previous July. Automatic arms in the POUM Lenin division were 4% of the proportion prescribed by Spanish Army regulations. At times the men were left with an average of twenty rounds per person—a disastrously insufficient number for the mildest defensive, let alone an offensive. Artillery and aviation were virtually non-existent. Shotguns and rifles of which the barrels had been sawed down twice, featured with tragic prominence.

On two occasions, the Generality had decreed conscription of two classes—in January and after the fall of Malaga. But on both occasions there was insufficient equipment really to mobilize the men. Valencia made the provisioning of armaments conditional upon the Generality's surrender of its control of the forces and the institution of a Regular Army. Evidently these arms were not *apriori* unavailable.

On no field was the utter pitifulness of anarchist doctrines more cruelly exposed than in the matter of the economic problems thrown up by the war. Marxists recognize that as long as the economic and psychological elements of the old society have not been fully eradicated, as long as social production and productivity have not been stepped up to the point where the motto "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" can be put into practice, many of the forms of the old society (money, wages, profits of the socialist trusts, etc.) must be continued. These old forms will, however, be imbued with a new class *content* under the proletarian dictatorship. Not so with the anarchists. For them money was to be abolished on the morrow of the cataclysm. But the "intransigence" of the anarchists on this question suffered a fate similar to that of their "intransigence" on the matter of state power. Having failed to concentrate power in their own hands, having left the economic nerve centres, the banks, untouched, and limited themselves to the collectivization of the factories, the anarchists found

themselves the captives of the laws of a capitalist economy whose wings they had indeed singed but not clipped. Not only did the old economic forms (money, etc.), which they had but yesterday disallowed, continue to exist, but so too did the old content. With the Valencia Government and the capitalists (intent upon the sabotage of the Aragon front) in control of the gold reserve and the credit-creating apparatus, the anarchist workers in possession of the factories of Catalonia found themselves helpless seriously to provision their comrades at the front. Dependent upon cash sales for their ability to pay their wages and provide themselves with raw materials, the workers in the factories were compelled to surrender the arms and textiles they produced to Valencia. Meanwhile their militias at the front remained in a tragic state of disarmament and spent the winter in the trenches miserably clothed. History in general does not respect utopian schemes, but rarely has there been a grimmer mockery of a political illusion than in the case of Anarchism during the Spanish War.

\* \* \* \*

But the Stalinites, who themselves bore the guilt for the sabotage of Aragon, did not let the matter rest there. With fabulous brass that perhaps evokes still more astonishment than indignation, they conducted both in Spain and internationally a violent and scurrilous campaign in which they accused the anarchists and POUM, (and sometimes "the Catalans") of cowardice and indifference for remaining inactive in Aragon.

Comfortable little people of shady pasts and dubious futures permitted themselves these accusations against the workers who had crushed the insurrection almost bare-handed in Barcelona and with ridiculous armament had breasted the struggle in Aragon last summer to carry away unheard-of victories such as Estrecho Quinto and Mount Aragon. The taking of the latter fortress under the given conditions had been declared theoretically impossible by military specialists. But the POUM and Anarchist battalions took it last August even though they left 1,500 on the field.

On several occasions the POUM and Anarchists ventured attacks. In April the Rojinegra Division had already taken the Huesca-Jaca road when fascist aviation appeared (the loyalist aviation failed to show up) and mowed down 600 men in one half hour. The same thing occurred at St. Cytherea.

It was only after the May events in Barcelona when the control of the Aragon Front (reorganized into the Army of the East) had already passed into the hands of Valencia, that material was sent up to the Aragon Front. But by that time the fascists in Aragon were not only well prepared but were even in the process of organiz-

ing an offensive. The limited and dearly-purchased advances achieved before Zaragossa and Teruel since provide only the shabbiest of indications of the possibilities last winter when the enemy was neglecting Aragon to centre his effort on Madrid.

## Government Crisis and Working Class Disorientation

Towards the middle of March a violent crisis arose in the Catalan Generality in connection with a Public Order Bill. This called for the liquidation of the Workers' Patrols that preserved order in Catalonia and their replacement by a "neutral" police force, the members of which were to be forbidden membership in any party or trade union. The anarchist ministers had signed the bill in all statesmanly serenity, but refused to carry out its provisions in the face of the opposition of their rank and file. The UGT had made the demand that the Anarchists be removed from the Ministry of War.

During the weeks of deadlock that ensued the political situation in Catalonia reached an unprecedented pitch of intensity. Clearer than at any time before, the broad masses caught a glimpse of the deep chasm that separated them from the bourgeois politicians and of the imminent need of defending their conquests with arms in hand. On several occasions solutions were announced that lasted until the next morning. The President, Companys, stepped down from his exalted position to attempt in person to muster a stable cabinet grouping. A well-organized campaign of adulation of Companys was unleashed in the bourgeois and Stalinite press—the desperate effort of the propertied classes to build a Caesar to straddle the cleft between the hostile classes in their own interest. The same press poured out its venom against the CNT which was saddled with all conceivable crimes against the "fatherland." At long last—after three weeks—a "solution" was at hand that was no solution at all, but simply another retreat of the CNT before the ever bolder bourgeois reaction. The "solution" that had taken three weeks to hatch was in fact a cabinet of the same personnel and the same portfolio distribution as the previous one—with the significant addition of a presidential committee of the CNT, UGT and Esquerra and Rabassaires to supervise the functioning of the War Ministry. The real issue—that of disarming the workers—had been left in abeyance until the bourgeoisie would be strong enough to impose their solution.

In December, having been ejected from the Generality together with its regrets, the POUM adopted the position for a government based on Workers' and Peasants' councils. The change, however, was not to be taken seriously since the POUM avoided a critical

evaluation of its recent governmental experience. No sooner did the March crisis of the Generality bring the remote possibility of a ministerial seat onto its horizon than the entire position for councils collapsed like a house of cards. First it became a Workers' and Peasants' Government of all workers' parties (apparently within the framework of the Generality) which in turn would call a Constituent Assembly of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Councils. This was not only a logical inversion, not only the placing of the cart before the horse. It was a monstrous reformist concept whereby the soviets were to arise through the intermediary of the bourgeois state apparatus rather than in a life and death struggle against it.

But this slogan too was not destined to last long. In the midst of the crisis the POUM abandoned all talk of factory and peasants' councils and espoused the cause of a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" of all workers' parties (still apparently based on the Generality) which would call a congress of Trade Union delegates and representatives from the front. The hope then was to utilize the apparatus of the trade unions and, of course, the bourgeois state. But the revolution has a rhythm and a logic all its own. It cannot be fitted into organizational forms that descend from a different period and were built to answer other needs. The trade unions are characterized by inertia and an ossified routine and structure. They lack the necessary flexibility to serve as the vehicle for the intense initiative of the masses without which no revolution is possible. It is impermissible to make the revolution conditional upon the capture of the apparatus of trade unions in which a conservative and even counter-revolutionary bureaucracy is powerfully entrenched. It is no accident that in Germany and Britain where the working class was also powerfully organized within trade unions, other bodies (*Arbeiterräte* and the shop steward movement respectively) sprang into being to serve the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary struggles of the workers after the war.

In Spain the spontaneous action of the masses had failed to create new bodies of unity from the base. For unlike Germany the old conservative trade union apparatuses had been swept into the struggle due to its initially diffused anti-fascist and defensive character. The revolutionary nature of the struggle, we have already shown, became explicit only later.

The POUM, that never tires of cataloguing the objective difficulties of the Spanish Revolution, omits to mention that before the revolution it carried on propaganda in favor of the Alianzas Obreras (liaison committees of workers' organizations) as the specific Spanish substitute for the "Russian" soviets organized on the basis

of representation directly from the factories. The much abused objective difficulty is too frequently the harvest of one's stupidities of yesterday.

The POUM has attempted to fend off criticism of its endless jay-walking with regard to the problem of the organs of workers' power by underlining the contrasts between the Russian and Spanish revolutions, and the resultant impossibility of applying mechanically the *clichés* of organizational form and method brought over from the Russian revolution. That the question presents itself differently in Spain than in Russia is incontestable. But rather than serve as a license for every manner of dodging the issue, this circumstance should have occasioned a serious study of the concrete peculiarities of the Spanish situation and the elaboration of the proper approach to resolving the problem as firmly planted on Spanish soil.

Whatever the differences with Russia, it is clear that only organs independent from and in deadly rivalry with the old state apparatus, bodies genuinely representative of the exploited masses based upon the broad non-partisan democracy of all the toilers in factory, field and in the army, can serve as the organizational form for the establishment of revolutionary power. The ghastly bureaucratic degeneration of the soviets in the Russia of Stalin, in no way justifies a retreat to schemes for the utilization of the bourgeois state or of the old bureaucratic apparatus of the trade unions. The fate of the Russian working class only emphasizes the need for authentic revolutionary organs of workers' and peasants' democracy.

Once having made clear this goal, it is necessary to abandon all preconceived notions as to the method of its realization and to examine seriously every phenomenon that appears in working class life with a view to its usefulness as a means towards this end. For instance, the law of collectivization, for all its reactionary spirit, established workers' councils in the factories to look after the technical-economic direction of the industries. In the absence of the intervention of a revolutionary party to prevent this, in most cases they came under the mechanical domination of the trade union bureaucracy. But formally, at least, they represented the first bodies based on all the workers. Might it not have been possible to bring these committees to overstep their strictly economic functions and become points of departure for the development of political organs of the working class?

There was the more important case of the militias. These were composed of peasants and workers from throughout the country, and were less in the grip of an already established bureaucracy than

the workers in the factories. Through the formation of combatants' councils they might have become the starting point for the spread of such councils, by force of example, to the villages and factories behind the lines. But the POUM opposed violently every effort to realize its slogan of soldiers' councils in its own militia!

The POUM forces at the front were concentrated in its own Lenin Division with the exception of a force of a few hundred on the Teruel front. Although the establishment of a special POUM Division had been made necessary by the need to improvise an armed force at the beginning of the war, the accompanying neglect of serious nucleus work in the other militias and later in the Popular Army was a fatal error. Conducting agitation for soldiers' committees throughout all the armed forces, reinforcing its propaganda with the eloquence of example in its own detachments, the revolutionary party could have exploited the existence of workers' militias as a springboard for the creation of councils in the rear. Had the necessary work towards this end been carried on in the militias, the bourgeoisie should have inherited, with the formation of the Popular Army, a formidable system of combatants' councils—the organs of challenge to bourgeois power.

\* \* \* \*

Within the CNT a current of discontent with the reformist policies of the leadership began to make itself felt. In April the *Amigos de Durruti* came into being with a program that rejected the governmental collaboration, the compromise with reaction, and criticized the failure to seize power in July and August. It set itself the task of winning the CNT-FAI away from its class collaboration.

Inside the POUM, too, the supine policies of the Executive Committee did not go unresisted. In connection with the forthcoming POUM Congress, groups in Barcelona and Madrid published theses that contained a scathing Marxist indictment of the entire course of the party since the outbreak of the war.

### Barricades in Barcelona

There was no May Day demonstration in Barcelona this year. The Generality, flanked by the reformist labor leaders, does its utmost to trample under foot everything reminiscent of the revolutionary past of the working class. But the workers know how to honour their revolutionary traditions in a more eloquent way. The first week in May saw barricades in Barcelona—barricades thrown up by the workers in response to a brazen provocation of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state stood two inches removed from being

snuffed out entirely. If the Generality survived the test, it is only because the heroic workers who manned the barricades were deserted and betrayed by their leaders.

The bourgeoisie sought to avoid a premature armed clash, fearing with all wordly justice the outcome of such a test. The soporifics administered to the workers by their reformist leadership had up to now enabled the bourgeoisie to carry away a brilliant measure of success. But the plans of the counter-revolution approached their final, most critical stage—that of disarming the workers. And the masses who were so easily bamboozled on the delicate questions of state power were showing a magistral appreciation of the need of hanging onto their guns that left nothing, absolutely nothing, to be desired.

The last week of April the Generality sent carabineros to Puig Cerda on the French frontier to relieve the workers' committees of the frontier control. The anarchists replied by disarming the carabineros and the local UGT, PSUC and Esquerra to boot. Reinforcements were sent by the POUM and the CNT from as far as Barcelona and the fighting radiated out from Puig Cerda. Only with the arrival of further detachments of Guards was the Government able to get the situation in hand.

The plan of the Generality was to proceed with the "cleansing" of the provinces first, and later to settle accounts with the workers of an anarchist Barcelona. But Puig Cerda, where the workers had been strengthened by reinforcements from the outside, indicated how essential for the fulfilment of this plan was the absolute control of the Barcelona Telephone Central. Only thus could the workers in the momentary zone of operations be cut off from their comrades in the rest of Catalonia. But the Stalinites overreached themselves. Mistaking the supineness of the CNT leaders for the mood of the masses, they did not foresee the extent of the mass response to their attempt to lay hands on the Telefonica. There resulted a hopeless inferiority of their forces in Catalonia when struggle broke out. The consequences of this error were well-nigh fatal. It required all the treachery of the working class leadership to rehabilitate the situation for the bourgeoisie.

On May 3rd armed forces led by the Stalinist Salas and acting upon instructions from the Minister of Public Safety, Aiguade, took the Telefonica building in Barcelona from the workers. The coup carried by surprise and only later were the workers able to drive the police out of the upper half of the building. The response

of the workers was instantaneous. Barricades sprang up all over Barcelona. Civilian Assault Guards were disarmed in the workers' districts, and in turn disarmed the workers where the latter were outnumbered. A general strike of city transports was declared. All cars were stopped and searched for arms by the workers' patrols. A veritable arsenal of arms appeared on the workers' barricades—rifles, sub-machine guns, automatics, machine guns, hand grenades, and where necessary, artillery and armoured cars. In many districts Workers' Defence Committees of the Anarchists sprang into action, and, operating in contact with the POUM, took charge of the struggle. From the very first the military position of the Generality armed forces was hopeless. Bottled up in precarious patches in the centre of the city, they were beleaguered on all sides by the workers' barricades. In the proletarian districts and the industrial centres from the very beginning the workers' control was not so much as challenged. The suburbs of Barcelona without exception, were in the workers' hands. The food supply was controlled by them as was the harbour and the transportation system. The fortress of Montjuich with its cannon commanding the city and the heights of Tibidabo were under the control of the anarchists. Twenty armoured cars were at their disposal to clean the streets where the Guards had barricaded themselves. The Stalinite Cuartel Carlos Marx was dominated by the workers' artillery. In the Plaza Espana artillery and an armoured car put the Guards to flight.

Innumerable motor cars flying the colors of the Soviet Consulate abused their diplomatic immunity by carrying arms to besieged groups of Guards.

The "senoritos" of PSUC, who shine so in parades and funeral processions from all evidence at hand do not excel to the same degree when it comes to handling guns. From the earliest moments of the struggle, the PSUC had to appeal to the Assault Guards to defend its Hotel Colon. A portion of the rank and file of the Stalinite United Socialist Youth as well as certain groups of Assault Guards declared themselves "neutral" and surrendered their guns to the Anarchists.

But with such brilliantly incontestable advantages the city was not lacking of the bourgeois armed forces; the Government of the Generality was allowed to remain intact. The workers were betrayed and calumniated by their leadership. From nowhere came the guidance and the political perspective that would have made it possible to realize their crushing military superiority in the form

of a successful revolution. *Solidaridad Obrera*, the organ of the CNT, scolded and implored, cried for the brotherhood of all anti-fascists, when rifles were barking the incompatibility of bourgeois rule and workers' liberties. The PSUC and UGT shouted "fascist provocateurs" and howled for the suppression of POUM. *Solidaridad* denounced the Friends of Durruti as bourgeois agents and provocateurs. CNT joined with UGT in calling upon the workers to return to work and leave their insanity. The anarchists on the barricades tore *Solidaridad* to pieces.

When the news of the Barcelona events reached the Aragon front, one thousand Anarchist and POUM troops set out for Barcelona, taking with them pieces of light artillery for possible eventualities. At the Catalan frontier they were met by Generality representatives, who, after parleys with the POUM and Anarchist military leaders, induced them to return to the front.

POUM, whose militants were shedding their blood on the barricades and winning the admiration and respect of the Anarchists, in the midst of the struggle, called for a retreat. On May 6; *Batalla* in small format (its printing plant had been occupied by *Estad Catala*), announced that the provocation had been repelled, that it was necessary to abandon the barricades and return to disciplined work for the defeat of fascism. Not a word about disarming the bourgeois forces, about the overthrow of the bourgeois government, of the establishment of workers' power. The POUM leadership, frightened out of its wits and habitually tail-ending the Anarchist leadership, called for a capitulation with no guarantees when victory was there for the taking. What meant its chatter of partial victories while the police controlled the Telefonica and thousands of reinforcements were on their way from Valencia? *Batalla* aroused the deepest indignation among the rank and file of POUM who had given an altogether different accounting of themselves on the barricades. The wretched leadership of POUM, that had just edited theses, emphasizing that no violence would be necessary for the revolution in Catalonia, was once again overwhelmed by the events it had not foreseen.

Infinitely to the left was the leaflet issued by the Friends of Durruti, left grouping in the CNT, calling for the establishment of a revolutionary Junta, the disarming of the bourgeois forces, the liquidation of the counter-revolutionary parties, the shooting of those responsible for the provocation, for the social revolution. The same leaflet appearing immediately before the disgraceful number of *Batalla* greeted POUM for its solidarity on the barricades. POUM, with a revolutionary leadership, could have won a com-

manding place for itself amongst the anarchist masses. Even with the shameful role of its present leadership, there is no doubt that its prestige grew, thanks to the struggle of its militants.

During the second day of the fighting a new Government was formed at the Generality consisting of representatives of the CNT, UGT, Esquerra and the Unio de Rabassaires. Sese, the UGT Minister designated was killed the same day and his place taken by another UGT nominee. The first act of the new Government, consisting in its majority of eminent Catalan patriots professionally jealous of Catalonia's autonomous rights, was to hand over control of public order to the Valencia government. The latter at once appointed General Pozos, known for his anti-working class views, to the command.

While assurances were being issued on all sides and normalcy had been restored, the fighting broke out once more. During one of the brief intervals that interrupted the fighting, and that was represented by all interested parties as a final lasting peace, the Assault Guards gave testimony of their amicable and pacifist intentions by tearing up the CNT and POUM cards found on all workers arrested. The workers, abandoned by their leaders, felt that nothing had yet been decided. On the fifth day demoralization got the upper hand and with the arrival of five thousand men from Valencia the workers gave up the struggle. The forces from Valencia (in themselves from the military point of view in no way decisive), could have been prevented from arriving on the least sign from the Anarchist leadership. French and British battleships steamed into Barcelona Harbor together with three units of the Loyalist Spanish fleet.

Nothing had been resolved. For days the armed forces from Valencia who strolled up and down the Ramblas with their rifles (the celebrated Russian arms had at last reached Catalonia!) took nice precaution to turn about before reaching Gracias and other workers' districts. The workers retained their arms. They retained, too, a deep sense of bitterness at the treachery of their leaders. Five hundred dead had fallen for no purpose. Whereas the workers, with a naive generosity, released their prisoners, the Government retained hundreds of Anarchists and POUMists in prison under indescribable conditions. Scores of militants, including the crippled Italian Anarchist leader, Berneri, were shot down in cold blood. Members of the Libertarian Youth were mutilated with bestial sadism. The workers clenched their fists and cursed their leaders and the bourgeoisie. Barcelona remained split into two hostile armed camps.

## Aftermath

For some people history exists only as an inexhaustible source of murky analogies with which to cover up their political errors. The POUM drew the parallel between its shameful capitulation in the May struggle and the July days in 1917 in Russia. Nothing could be more crassly amiss. In Russia in 1917, the July days arose as an episode on the upward curve of development of the revolution. The masses, exasperated by the murderous offensive at the front, assumed a premature offensive against the Kerensky government. The Bolsheviks, while taking their places alongside the workers, exerted a restraining influence to prevent the bourgeoisie from transforming the events into a decisive bleeding of the proletariat. In Spain, things stood fundamentally otherwise. Last August the workers had let slip the opportunity of definitely destroying the old state. The May Days came as a climax of a long counter-revolutionary counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie. The workers, assaulted in vital positions, had only two alternatives. They could either take up the struggle and carry it through to its consistent conclusion, the disarming of the bourgeois forces; or else submit to that sort of defeat that stings and demoralizes most—where key positions have been needlessly surrendered without a struggle.

The seizure of power in Catalonia by the workers would, of course, have raised the problem of relations with the rest of Spain. But conditions elsewhere in Spain were favourable for the spread of the revolution. The Left Socialist workers of Valencia were already chafing at the bit. A few weeks later their struggle against the Stalinists was to break out openly. The control of Catalonia should have placed the overwhelmingly greater part of the industry in Loyalist Spain in the hands of the workers. Even with the limited resources of Catalan heavy industry, the Aragon front could have been stiffened materially. The Catalan workers' government would have been free to apply the weapons of the revolution (decree giving the land to peasants, settling accounts with the blood-sucking speculators and saboteurs, liberation of the colonies) to win the masses not only of the rest of Loyalist Spain but of the fascist territory. The majority of the troops on the other fronts of Spain were unreliable for use against the workers. Risks there were; no revolution is made without triple boldness and audacity. The alternative of cringing capitulation would not mitigate the ensuing white terror. But there was never opportunist who did not palm off his cowardice as caution.



The POUM leadership had dreamed pipe-dreams of the bourgeoisie withdrawing from the streets as obligingly as the workers and the *status quo ante* being re-established. The nursery rhyme of Humpty-Dumpty breathed a keener spirit of realities. The capitalist class exploited the capitulation of the workers with brutal thoroughness. Anarchists and POUM arrests multiplied daily. The private prisons of the PSUC and GPU were being filled continually. The censorship ran amok and during weeks the POUM remained without a press—*La Batalla* had been suspended and the leadership was too timid and ill-prepared to replace it with an illegal press. Its radio station was surrendered in *anticipation* of the government ban. The bourgeois-Stalinist press began a screeching campaign against the collectivization in order to wrest the industries from the hands of the workers. Truckloads of armed guards patrolled the streets and raided the workers' headquarters.

Shortly after the May days, the struggle long latent between Caballero and the Stalinites flared out into the open. Caballero, whose government had initiated the counter-revolution in Spain, felt his position amongst the Left Socialist workers of Valencia and Madrid compromised by the brutal forms assumed by the Stalinite repression. In addition, the monopolistic appetites of the Stalinite machine threatened the Socialist apparatus. Caballero was ousted from the Government. The "Spanish Lenin" overnight became a vilified fascist. Valencia, in the past better provisioned than Barcelona, suddenly felt the intensified pangs of hunger as the Stalinites applied to it the treatment formerly reserved for Catalonia. The Communist party discovered the usual "plot" of fascist insurrection, this time on the part of the Left Socialists of Valencia. Caballero, perhaps found consolation in the unreserved way in which the CNT and the POUM took up his cause. The POUM raised the slogan of "A CNT-UGT Government" in the hope of being able to resume its collaboration with the bourgeois state. Later, the Stalinites arranged to produce a split in the ranks of the UGT through their efforts to oust Caballero from the leadership. Manoeuvring with the bourgeoisie organized in "trade unions", and mechanically dominated organizations, helped them to their end.

\* \* \* \*

On June 17th, two days before the scheduled congress of POUM, simultaneous raids were made on all the premises of POUM in Catalonia. Almost the entire leadership of the party, hundreds of its militants and foreign revolutionaries in contact with it were arrested. The raids were organized by the Russian GPU—with a thoroughness which contrasted strikingly with the habitual sloven-

liness of the Spanish bureaucracy. At the same time there appeared a law on espionage that enriched jurisprudence by extending the charge to cover "demoralization at the rear", and the stirring up of discontent against the government. For these crimes the death sentence could be imposed. Throughout Spain and abroad the Stalinite press initiated a campaign of vilification against the POUM in which the characteristic disregard for plausibility was counterbalanced by volume and fury.

Andres Nin, who had been arrested on the 15th of June, was assassinated by the agents of the GPU. The Government announced his disappearance from prison and later, with no great regard for consistency, the Minister of Justice told an international commission that at no time had he been in a *government* prison. The thrice-paid-for Russian arms were being paid for once again. What the sorely overworked Government police could not handle was taken care of by the *pistoleros* of Stalinism. Navarro, a military leader of POUM, was shot down on the streets of Barcelona.

The POUM, surprised by the masterly organization of the repression, at first fell into utter collapse. Soon, however, an illegal press was established. The conditions for underground work are favorable due to the widespread connivance produced by the dissension in the camp of the counter-revolution and the broad sympathies of the masses. But the political position of POUM, if anything, is more miserable than previously. The revolutionary position is liquidated into the struggle between Caballero and the Stalinites.

The arrests spread beyond the POUM. Thousands of Anarchists were thrown into prison. The entire German section of the CNT was deported or imprisoned. Foreign revolutionaries, amongst them comrades seriously wounded at the front, were detained under unmentionable conditions without charges for several months and finally released without as much as a questioning. Spain had become the private game preserve of the GPU, where it could slake its private thirstings for vengeance unhampered. Erwin Wolf, a former secretary of Trotsky, and Kurt Landau, one-time secretary of the international Trotsky organization, were kidnapped by the GPU and liquidated after efforts to groom them for roles in further Moscow trials had failed.

At the same time as working class revolutionaries are made the butt of a bloodthirsty persecution, the powers that were of yesterday are ushered ever more shamelessly to the fore.

Churches are re-opened and mass is said in Barcelona and Madrid, with Government and Communist Party auspices and enthusiasms. Members of the POUM are summoned to court by Messrs. Bourgeois for having confiscated their buildings in August, 1936. The bourgeois parliaments of the Republic and Catalonia are re-opened with pomp and ceremony. Bourgeois deputies return reassured from France where they have roosted expectantly since the beginning of the war. An ever-thickening stream of the gentry of yesterday return to Spain with praise on their lips for the achievements of the Stalinist reaction.

\* \* \* \*

Behind the "Government of Victory" ushered in with such clatter in May stretches a dismal record of defeats. Its "defence" of the northern territory consisted of speculation on support from Great Britain. But the British Iron and Steel Federation found it simpler to obtain guarantees of uninterrupted shipment of iron ore from the Basque mines from Franco. For a whole year, the Basque Nationalists at Bilbao sabotaged the struggle of the Austrian miners in the same way and for the same reason as the Valencia Government crippled the Aragon front. And now, the Basque Nationalists, bosom friends of the Stalinists, hand over intact to Franco industrial plants that place nine-tenths of the vital heavy industry of Spain in the hands of the fascists. At Santander, the Civil Guard, pampered for use against the revolution with salaries several times that of the workers, deserts 30,000 strong to the enemy. Valencia fails to send aeroplanes to relieve the North. The bloody adventure of Brunete is organized by the Stalinists to distract attention from its bankruptcy in the North. The military specialists have advised against it: but thousands of International Brigadiers are futilely sacrificed to rehabilitate the prestige of the Government. In Aragon, while Anarchist troops are taking Belchite, the Stalinist Lister Brigade is engaged in breaking up Anarchist collectives a few miles behind the lines.

Valladares, Minister of the Interior during the Black Two Years, who fled to France and openly espoused the cause of fascism, is welcomed back officially to address the Cortes, and his property is restored. What contributes to his importance is the fact that his connections with Franco qualify him as a mediator for an armistice. The rumors of negotiations towards this end thicken. The Government of the Republic moves to Barcelona to organize the victory from a point as close as possible to the French frontier. The naval

blockade tightens as Franco concentrates on the Mediterranean coast the fleet released from the North by the fall of Gijon. Prieto-Negrin profit by the consequent dwindling of the inflow of Russian arms to recoup their independence vis-a-vis the Stalinists. They have become restive in the face of the monopolistic encroachments of the Stalinists upon the state apparatus. The dismissal of Del Vayo from his post in the army reflects this development. The crudeness of the Stalinist repression threatens to compromise the very game of the counter-revolution. In Catalonia, the PSUC has long been at grips with the Esquerra for the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The Anarchist leaders prepare a new, outright capitulation to Stalinism. The workers are crushed into conditions of increasing misery. . .

### Perspectives and Conclusions

As the working class revolution in Spain is progressively forced into the background, the other aspect of the struggle as a clash of imperialist lusts for plunder looms ever larger. But the working class, though suffering serious defeats, is far from liquidated as a political factor. Despite the efforts of the bourgeoisie to date, the Catalan workers remain in possession of the greater part of the factories. What is of still greater importance, they retain their arms. As the impotence and treachery of the Negrin Government at the front appears ever more clearly, as the fractional conflict within the camp of the counter-revolution deepens, possibilities will arise for the seizure of power. But without the presence of a revolutionary party, these opportunities can only be wasted in spontaneous actions of the masses devoid of perspectives and carried out under conditions far less advantageous than those of last May.

The outcome of the Spanish Revolution depends upon the rapidity with which a really revolutionary party can be brought into being. If this can be done before the termination of the war, there is a serious likelihood of the proletariat seizing power and conducting the military operations to a successful conclusion. For all the reaction in Loyalist Spain the workers still retain positions to defend against Fascism. Hence the incorrectness of defeatism in the war.

If the creation of a strong revolutionary party were not achieved before the end of the war, the above variant would be eliminated. Should the Loyalist Government win, the capitalist reaction would be of a less thorough-going character. The bourgeois Republicans,

basing themselves on the reformist organizations of the working class, are hampered in the extent of their white terror. This issue of the struggle could be only of the most provisional character. The decrepit state of Spanish capitalism must bring about another resort to fascist surgery. But the respite could be used by the workers to prepare themselves for a new struggle. The likelihood of the defeat of the Fascists by the bourgeois republic, however, to be regarded as virtually excluded.

An outright victory of Franco would represent the greatest possible catastrophe for the Spanish working class—the annihilation of all the organizations of the proletariat together with a wholesale bleeding that would throw the movement back for years. This would mark the end of the revolution that began in 1931.

The variant that presents itself as the most probable in the absence of a proletarian revolution is a government arising from a compromise between the reactionaries of Salamanca and Barcelona—in reality imposed by the rival imperialist groupings to administer a division of the spoils. In the troops of Franco the bourgeoisie of Loyalist Spain would acquire, for the first time, a large reactionary armed force. This would be utilized to drive the workers from the last of their revolutionary conquests. The reactionary regime resulting from such an arrangement would resemble in more than one respect the militarist regime of Primo de Rivera rather than a fascist set-up. The reformist bureaucracy would be incorporated into the state apparatus. The Stalinist bureaucracy might well be deprived of a similar haven due to considerations of foreign policy (such a compromise would constitute a step towards an understanding between Germany and Britain directed against Russia).

But even in such a case the experiences of the Spanish revolution would not have been lost on the working class. The taking over of the factories, the aborted steps in the direction of working class power, are facts that no terror could erase from the memory of the workers. During the period of reaction, the leading elements of the Spanish proletariat would ponder over and assimilate the lessons of their defeat and prepare the victory of tomorrow. On this basis, it would be possible for the Spanish proletariat to outgrow its traditional weaknesses and prejudices and forge a Marxist party, capable of leading it in the next inevitable revolution.

There is nothing exceptional about the intervention of German and Italian Imperialisms in the Spanish civil war. The very demo-

cratic heroes of the Non-Intervention Committee intervened most brazenly with men and money against the Russian Revolution of 1917. They would have done the same in Spain had Italy and Germany not relieved them of the task. Only the independent action of the international working class, defense in the immediate sense (strikes and boycott to prevent shipment of troops and material), and offensive in the long run (the extension of the revolution internationally), can hold world reaction at bay. The reformist and Stalinist parties, tied up body and soul with their own bourgeoisies, can contribute nothing but platonic sighs to the defence even of those struggles for the maintenance of bourgeois democracy to which they give their sanction. The Socialist and Communist Internationals, with their pathetic belief in the Geneva swindle, drugged the workers into the passive acceptance of Non-Intervention. They disallowed militant strike action in support of Loyalist Spain as too great a strain on the cherished ties with the bourgeois liberals at home.

The CNT justifies its surrender to the bourgeoisie on the ground that the Spanish workers have been betrayed by the international proletariat. But only a bold and consistent revolutionary policy in Spain could have inspired the workers abroad to break away from its treacherous leadership and organized effective aid to revolutionary Spain. A revolutionary party in the Spanish situation could have played the same role in the regeneration of the disorientated international movement, as the Bolsheviks did in 1917. A bold championing of the independence of the Spanish colonies could harness in support of the working class in Europe the energies of the boiling cauldron of colonial revolt that the Fascists know how to exploit so well for their own ends. The repercussions of a revolutionary policy in Spain would have set fire alike to the capitalist democracies and the regimes of the Fascist invaders.

But the Anarchist leaders, indulgent with themselves, are sternly exacting of the international working class. The world proletariat, demoralized and without revolutionary leadership, failed to respond at once to the gropings of the equally leaderless working class of Spain. Hence the Anarchist leaders recoiled from the uncertainties of world revolution and clutched at the consoling assuredness of being smothered in the grip of the Spanish and international "democratic" bourgeoisie.

\* \* \* \*

International anarchism, under the pressure of the Spanish events, is being sundered into two tendencies separated by the barricades of the class struggle. Faced with a concrete revolution-

ary situation, all sections of Spanish anarchism have taken flight to "politics"; the right wing to the worst practices of "Marxist" reformism, and lefts towards the position of revolutionary dictatorship. The specific "anti-political" ideology of anarchism, to the extent that it survives, serves only as a haze that obscures this wholesome differentiation. The revolutionary wing of anarchism have come to adopt: revolutionary terror against the bourgeoisie—the essence of the long unpalatable concept of proletarian dictatorship; a centralized proletarian army, police force, administration, i.e., the proletarian state. Their main shortcoming from the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism is their inadequate appreciation of the role of the revolutionary party.

On its part, the Marxists, rather than whitewash every detail of Bolshevik policy in Russia of Lenin, must apply the methods of critical analysis to trace the roots of the degeneration of the Soviet state. The backsliding of the revolution in Russia was caused primarily by its isolation in a backward country. But the restriction of the democracy of the Soviets during the civil war facilitated this process. It was easy enough to circumscribe workers' democracy during the war in the interests of greater efficiency and centralization. The Bolshevik party carried this out with the best intentions of re-establishing it a year or two later. But in the interim hostile class elements had entrenched themselves so firmly in the apparatus that they could not be dislodged. Without the constantly live democratic control of the workers, mere formal dependence on the factories is no guarantee that Soviets will remain a proletarian state apparatus. The lesson that Marxists must draw from the degeneration of the Russian Revolution is the need of preserving jealously the democratic character of the workers' councils both before and after the revolution.

With this added emphasis on workers' democracy, the positions of Lenin are the basis upon which the revolutionary Anarchist and Marxist elements must meet. In Spain, the fusion of the revolutionary wings of the Anarchist and Marxist camps holds the key to the situation.

\* \* \* \*

The Spanish events bear witness to the profoundly revolutionary character of the present epoch. During the gravest crisis that capitalist society had known, when the old world was manifestly bursting at all its seams, the Communist International became impressed with the basic solidity of the present system and banished the idea of a proletarian revolution from its horizon. Such is the premise of the policy of the Popular Front, that pretends to combat

fascism—itsself the by-product of the decay of the old liberal methods of capitalist government — by yoking the workers to the liberal capitalist parties. Social-Democracy finds its deadly opponent of yesterday at one with it in its old orientation of adaptation and manoeuvre within the framework of capitalism. These eminent *Realpolitiker*, whose realism consists in the fact that their political vision is unable to focus beyond the ends of their noses, build the defence of the Soviet Union and all the multiple human decencies on crumbling bourgeois democracy. Confronted with revolutionary crises that their blueprints do not foresee, at the best they can fumble and blunder and lead the working class to ruin. Not inherent stability of capitalism—but the treachery of the old labour movements explains the continued existence of the capitalist system.

The deep-going political crises in which the present period is so rich, the desperate straits into which the ruling class is driven, and even the capacity of the workers for struggle and sacrifice are insufficient in themselves to overthrow the capitalist system. The spontaneous push of the working class in July, 1936, brought the Spanish Revolution incomparably farther than was the case in the Russian Revolution of 1917—it crushed the armed forces of the bourgeois state, it took the factories out of the hands of the capitalists, it pried the bourgeoisie out of its seats of power. It remained only for a conscious revolutionary leadership to stretch out its hand to consolidate these conquests by the establishment of a new proletarian state. Such a leadership was tragically absent. Hence the frittering away of the positions of the revolution and inexorable come-back of the bourgeoisie to power and vengeance. The grotesque degeneration of the Russian Revolution has brought into vogue theories denying the need for a vanguard to give direction to the spontaneous action of the masses. Such theories have been put to test in Spain under the most favourable conditions and found pitifully wanting.

The sorry picture painted of the POUM leadership in this pamphlet should lead no one to mistake the people comprising it for fools or inepts. Amongst the leaders of POUM were to be found men of gift and personal valour and even some who had stewed for years in the choicest juices of Marxism. To profess revolutionary or high-revolutionary principles in a normal period is a comparatively easy matter. But men of steel are required not to bend under the terrific pressure of a revolution. The best of revolutionary programs offers no assurance that its bearers will be of adequate moral stature to withstand the withering trials that leadership in a

revolution imposes. But a wavering program of comfortable ambiguities is as good as a guarantee that a party will collapse under the first decisive test.

Without a clear-sighted and uncompromising Marxist vanguard tempered in the struggles of the workers and capable of steering its course against all the headwinds of reaction, the emancipation of the proletariat is impossible. It is to the building of such parties, the sections of the future Fourth International, that revolutionaries today must devote themselves.



## The "Theory" of the Transition Government

The problem of such would-be "transitional" coalition governments has its history—a history intimately interwoven with the darkest disasters and most criminal betrayals of the Communist movement.

In the period of the 1905 revolution, Lenin, not having our wealth of historical experience to draw upon, and groping tentatively to define the character of the revolution that announced itself on the Russian horizon, devised the formula of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry. This expressed at once his profound disbelief at the time that the proletarian revolution was on the immediate order of the day in Russia, and the need of the exploited classes to struggle against the bourgeoisie in order to uproot Czarist feudalism.

Trotsky alone displayed the necessary boldness to predict the proletarian revolution in Russia. He based himself upon the thoroughly counter-revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie and the resultant need of uprooting it politically and economically in order really to achieve the slogans of the democratic revolution (land to the peasants, etc.). Thus the democratic revolution would require the proletarian dictatorship in order to be successful. But Lenin in any case had no illusions about the possibility of such middle-of-the-road governments overthrowing capitalism. On the contrary, his Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry had precisely the purpose of clearing the ground for an unhampered capitalist development. The small independent producers of a pre-capitalist economy are not only incapable of cutting the ground from under the feet of capitalism, but such economic forms must themselves through the workings of inherent economic laws give way to capitalist production. From these grounds arises the political impotence of the small producers to overthrow capitalism or even to undertake effective political action against it except under the leadership of the socialist proletariat.

Lenin with his extraordinary sense of realities abandoned his formula of 1905 when faced with the concrete situation of 1917. He reverted to the position of Trotsky for the Proletarian Dictatorship. But there were those of his following, notably Kamenev and Stalin, who clung to the old formula of 1905 and deduced from it the support not only of the Millukov-Kerensky Government but also of the Imperialist War.

The concept of the "transitional" government arose again during the discussions of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922. Zinoviev in his report swaddled the matter in ambiguities, presenting it at times as a coalition government based on the old state and at other times as a mere popular catchword for the proletarian dictatorship. The revolutionary events of 1923 ensued in Germany, and the Communist Party, instead of making a bid for power on the streets, entered the coalition governments in Saxony and Thuringia. At the Fifth Congress of the Communist International in 1924, Zinoviev, with an excess neither of scruples nor of finesse, made the accusation against Radek, the C.I. representative in Germany during the previous year, of having misinterpreted the C.I. slogan of Workers' and Peasants' Government. According to Zinoviev, it had been but a "translation from the Latin" of the proletarian dictatorship. Radek in reaffirming his false position that "humanity in its evolution from the ape to the people's commissar might pass through an intermediate stage of a Workers' and

'Peasants' Government' quoted enough from the speech of Zinoviev two years earlier to make it uncomfortable for the pretensions at infallibility of the C.I. leadership.

Trotsky in his fight against the degeneration of the C.I. had unending occasion to combat the theory of the transitional government, under the discarded Leninist formula of the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry. This was used to cover the criminal subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the butchers of the Kuo Ming Tang (1925-7) and every sort of adventure with bourgeois demagogues throughout the world [the mosaic of fakers gathered together under the name of the Peasants' International (Krestintern), etc.] Since then the Stalinite bureaucracy no longer experiences the need of sparing its maidenly scruples by covering its horse-deals with the bourgeoisie with the old Leninist terminology. We have entered into the period of open treachery—the era of the Popular Front.

It remains only to be said that the struggle of Trotsky against the opportunist theory of "traditional" governments has been pock-marked with inconsistencies. In 1923 he supported the entry of the German C.P. into the Saxony and Thuringia Governments. Ruth Fischer, who the following year succeeded Brandler to the leadership of the German Communist Party, recounts the story of Trotsky in 1923 illustrating on a map of Germany the strategic advantages which would ensue from the Communists participating in the cabinets of the two states. From these posts they were to organize a red army that could be used for the proletarian revolution throughout Germany. Alas!—to assign to Communist ministers in bourgeois cabinets the task of organizing red armies is sadly to over-estimate the power that goes with a ministerial cylinder hat!

During the same period (1923) he wrote in his book, "Europe and America": "Is the 'Workers' Government' capable of realization without a dictatorship of the proletariat? This question can be answered only with reservations. In any case, we conceive of the 'Workers' Government' as a stage (emphasis Trotsky's) to the dictatorship of the proletariat." (Article of Trotsky's in "Pravda", June 30, 1923—reprinted in EUROPA UND AMERIKA, Berlin, 1926.) In Trotsky's version of his struggle in the C.I. on this question the above autobiographical aspects do not, of course, feature. With the entry of the French Trotsky group into the Socialist Party in 1934 this theory of the amphibious government received a new unexpected revival. Amidst the crop of new "theories" produced ad hoc to justify the new line, there appeared that of a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" in the form of a Blum-Cachin coalition which, "granted a proper program of transitional demands, could ensure the transition to socialism".

## APPENDIX

Since the present pamphlet was printed the Loyalist forces at Teruel have wrested their greatest victory to date in the Spanish civil war. We have already had occasion to refer to the deadly menace to the Loyalists that Teruel represented in the hands of Franco. The Stalinist press has seized upon this long-overdue Loyalist victory as a vindication of the military program of the Popular Front. The circumstances surrounding the Teruel struggle constitute, however, a crushing indictment of the military policies of the bourgeois republic to date.

1. It is well known that the Loyalist push at Teruel served to forestall a long-announced fascist drive in the Teruel sector of the front. What the Loyalists had in their favor at Teruel was an element of tactical rather than strategic surprise. The capture of the city necessitated fighting the greatest battle of the war to date, involving hundreds of planes, tanks, cannon, etc. The estimates of the troops engaged on both sides run as high as 200,000 men. But at any time before last summer, Teruel (and Zaragoza, and Huesca) could have been taken with scarcely more well-equipped Loyalist troops than the number of the casualties that the city's capture resulted in last December. This was the period when Franco was concentrating his forces against Madrid, Malaga, and the Northern Provinces successively and neglecting Aragon. But, alas, it was also the period when the bourgeois government was heroically engaged in depriving the Aragon militias of all war materials in order to further its work of counter-revolution in Catalonia.

2. The manner in which Franco has been compelled to withdraw his best troops from all other fronts, shows how effective a Loyalist offensive in Aragon would have been to relieve pressure from Madrid, Malaga, Bilbao and Santander. In the case of the Northern Provinces the lack of lines of communications by sea and land with the rest of Loyalist Spain made impossible the sending of reinforcements to the besieged governmental troops (the shipment of sorely needed planes which was possible was also neglected). Everything depended on the ability to divert the enemy's forces to other fronts. And yet Aragon continued a front of inac-

tivity and disarmament. The successful attack on Belchite near Aragon came only after the backbone of the resistance of the North had been broken by the Fascists—weeks after the fall of Bilbao. The Fascists were no longer unprepared in Aragon. An offensive in Aragon as proposed by the POUM and CNT since the beginning of 1937 would not only have saved Bilbao and Malaga. It would have permitted the Loyalists to recoup the military initiative and increase immeasurably the prospects of bringing the war to an early victorious conclusion.

3. Seventy per cent of the troops participating in the capture of Teruel were revolutionary workers of the CNT-FAI. They fought with the inspiration and hope of the social revolution. Outstanding in the action was the Division 25 commanded by the CNT militant, Vivancos. Its three component brigades, 116, 117 and 118, are headed by Boada, Ejarque, Bretos and Castan, all anarchists. The glorious victory of Teruel must be placed alongside of Guadalajara and Belchite—also won by anarchist workers whose revolutionary spirit not all the reactionary dragooning of the bourgeois Popular Army has been able to crush.

In striking contrast with the conduct of the proletarian revolutionaries at the front is the treachery of the much-ballyhooed generals that the Popular Front has inherited from Alfonso.

There is, for example, nothing as instructive as the strange case of General Pozas. When the workers of Catalonia rose in arms last May in response to the brazen attack of the bourgeoisie on their positions, the Valencia Government sent Pozas into Catalonia to repress the working class in the rear and undertake the organization of the reactionary Popular Army at the front. The good general already known and hated among the workers of Catalonia for his part in the repressions after October 1934, acquitted himself of his job well. Thousands of militants of the POUM and the CNT were imprisoned and scores assassinated. At the Front the Division Lenin of the POUM was dissolved and its leaders arrested. Pozas addressed the Congress of the Catalan Stalinist Party, the PSUC, in August amidst ovations. The Stalinist press throughout the world that had slandered the revolutionary militants (yes, the victors of Teruel!) as Fas-

cists and Monarchists, drooled ecstatically in praise of "Anti-fascist" Pozas.

But in September during an engagement in front of Huesca thirty of the subordinate officers of Pozas ran over to the enemy, as well as 600 conscripts of the Stalinist Division Carlos Marx. Fifty other officers were court-martialled and executed for treachery. The entire sector that had previously been held by the POUM troops were surrendered to the enemy—Tierz, Casetas de Quicena on the road from Barbastro to Huesca that had been conquered inch by inch at great sacrifice by the POUM columns in the summer of 1936.

In October General Pozas was arrested for having had an understanding with the fascists. You will scour the Stalinist press in vain for the unexpected news.

\* \* \*

4. Should the bourgeoisie continue in power in loyalist Spain, the splendid victory of Teruel purchased so dearly with working class blood will only serve as an additional trump in the hands of Britain and France when they negotiate the settlement of the Spanish conflict with Germany and Italy. It can in no way alter the puppet role of the Barcelona Government in relation to Britain and France, or the lack of interest on the part of the Loyalist bourgeoisie to carry the war to a crushing victory over Franco. Since the present pamphlet was printed, the perspectives of a British - French - German rapprochement involving an armistice in Spain, have become seriously strengthened. The reorganisation of the Chautemps cabinet in France spells the doom of the Franco-Soviet pact. The bourgeois press carries reports of the imminent elimination of the Communist members from the Barcelona cabinet preparatory to the negotiation of an armistice and the formation of a compromise government with the Fascists of anti-soviet orientation. Counter-revolution under the slogan of the Popular Front is unquestionably necessary for the defence of the Soviet bureaucracy against the Russian working class. The defence of the Soviet Union itself however is undermined further with every successive Popular Front treachery.

Workers' power in Spain now more than ever remains the sole road to the annihilation of Franco.