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**WAR IN**

**SPAIN**

**TOWARDS SOCIALISM  
OR FASCISM**

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**BY FELIX MORROW**

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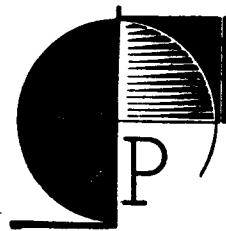
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*The Civil War  
In Spain*

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## Introduction

Fascist soldiers and workers' militiamen, entrenched near each other. In a lull in the fighting, they shout arguments back and forth:

"You are sons of peasants and workers," shouts a militiaman. "You should be here with us, fighting for the republic, where there is democracy and freedom."

The retort is prompt; it is the argument with which the peasantry has answered every reformist appeal since the republic came in 1931:

"What did the Republic give you to eat? What has the Republic done for us that we should fight for it?"

In this little incident, reported casually in the press, you have the essence of the problem of the civil war.

The peasantry, which is seventy percent of the population, has yet to be won to the side of the proletariat. It played no rôle in bringing the Republic in 1931. Its passivity and hostility led to the triumph of reaction in November, 1933. It played no part in the proletarian October revolt of 1934. Except in Catalonia and Valencia where the proletariat has declared for confiscation of the land and is already turning it over to the peasantry, and in parts of Andalusia where the landworkers have seized the land themselves, the masses of the peasantry are not yet rising to fight beside the working class.

No civil war as profound as the present one in Spain has ever been won without advancing a revolutionary social program. Yet the sole program of the coalition government headed by Caballero appears to be a military struggle. "Only after victory shall we be allowed to defend the political and social problems of the various groups composing the Left Popular Front," says a government spokesman (*New York Times*, Sept. 20). "There is only one point in our program and that is to win victory." As a matter of actual fact, however, the coalition government's slogan, "Defend the

Democratic Republic," *does* contain a social program; but it is the reformist program of defending the "kindest" political instrument of the bourgeois mode of production.

In the great French Revolution, the slogan of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" meant, quite concretely, land to the peasants, freedom from serfdom, a new world of labor and enrichment, wiping out the economic power of feudal oppressors, putting France into the hands of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. In the Russian Revolution, the slogan of "Land, Bread and Freedom" successfully rallied the people against Kornilov and Kerensky, because it meant the transformation of Russia. The proletariat of Spain will raise equally revolutionary slogans, or it will not win the civil war.

The Catalonian proletariat has already recognized this great truth. Its revolutionary program will not long remain confined within its own borders. Only today news has come that another party of the People's Front, the Syndicalist party formed after the October revolt by anarcho-syndicalists who recognized the need for participating in political life, has demanded a socialist program for the successful prosecution of the civil war. The Premiership of Caballero, the "extreme" left wing of the Popular Front, is itself a distorted recognition that the masses will not fight for the maintenance of capitalism. But Caballero's former laurels cannot and will not be a substitute for the very concrete content of a program of revolutionary socialism.

In the following pages are told the rich history of revolutionary experience which five short years have brought the Spanish proletariat. Out of the wisdom extracted from that extraordinarily concentrated experience, the Spanish proletariat is learning how to take its own destiny into its own hands. To the lessons of the Russian Revolution, are now being added the equally profound lessons of the Spanish Revolution.

NEW YORK, *September 22, 1936.*

# The Civil War in Spain

## I.

### THE BIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC—1931

“GLORIOUS, BLOODLESS, peaceful, harmonious” was the revolution of April 14, 1931. Two days before, the people had voted for the republican-socialist coalition in the countrywide municipal elections; this was enough to finish off Alfonso. The Spanish Republic came so easily. . . . Its advent, however, was almost the only bloodless event connected with the revolution before or since 1931.

For over a century Spain had been attempting to give birth to a new régime. But the paralysis of centuries of senile decay from the days of empire had doomed every attempt. All the more bloody, therefore, was the history of failure and its punishment. Four major revolutions before 1875, followed by four white terrors, were merely crescendoes in an almost continuous tune of peasant revolts and army mutinies, civil wars, regionalist uprisings, army pronunciamientos, conspiracies and counter-plots of court camarillas.

Nor did the modern bourgeoisie, when it belatedly appeared on the scene, proceed to preparing the bourgeois revolution. Modern industry and transportation dates from the Spanish-American War, which brought a new ferment to Spain. The years 1898-1914 are called the “national renaissance” (it was also the Indian summer of world capitalism). But the Spanish and Catalonian industrialists who flourished in those two decades vied with the most ancient landowning families in their loyalty to the monarchy. Some—like Count Romanones—were ennobled, purchased great tracts of land and combined in their own persons the old and the new economies; others cemented the bonds between the two by mortgages and intermarriages with the landed aristocracy. The King preserved the trappings of feudalism; but he was scarcely averse to associating with the bourgeoisie in their most dubious economic

ventures. Seeking new fields for exploitation, the bourgeoisie secured from Alfonso the conquest of Morocco, begun in 1912. Alfonso's profitable neutrality during the World War endeared him to the bourgeoisie, who for four years found the world market open to their wares.

When that market was taken back by the imperialists after the war, and the Catalan and Spanish proletariat launched great struggles, and when the workers' and peasants' respect for the régime had been dissolved by the disasters to the army in Morocco, the Catalan industrialists financed Primo de Rivera's *coup*. The dictator's program of public works and insurmountable tariff walls, suppression of the anarcho-syndicalists and compulsory arbitration boards for the socialist unions, gave industry a new impetus and to Rivera and Alfonso the most fervent adulation of the bourgeoisie. The world crisis put an end to Spanish prosperity and Rivera fell with the peseta in January 1930. But the bourgeoisie in the main still clung to Alfonso. Indeed, as late as September 28, 1930, and at a mass meeting protesting the government's course, Alcalá Zamora, who was to head the republic, could still end his speech with a pæan of praise to the crown.

Meanwhile, in May 1930, the students and workers of Madrid had hoisted red and republican flags, and engaged the police in rifle fire; in September the socialists and the U.G.T. made a pact with the republican groups to finish with the monarchy; revolutionary general strikes followed in Seville, Madrid, Bilbao, Barcelona, Valencia, etc., involving fatal encounters with the armed forces in every instance. A rising of the workers to coincide with a republican mutiny in the army was frustrated when the soldiers' revolt of December 12 was precipitated before the time planned; but the executions of the soldier-leaders inspired a manifesto signed by republican and socialist leaders announcing their object to be the immediate introduction of the republic. The signatories were put in the Model Prison of Madrid—and it became the center of Spanish political life. Premier Berenguer's desperate attempt to provide a Cortes on the old model as a support for Alfonso was defeated by the republican-socialist declaration of a boycott; Berenguer resigned. The municipal elections demonstrated that the masses were for a republic.

It was only at this last moment that the industrialists, frightened by the general strikes, by arming of the workers openly going on, and by the socialist threat of a national general strike, decided the monarchy was a cheap sacrifice to the wolves of the revolution. Then, and only then, when Alfonso himself was agreeing



that to fight was futile, did the bourgeoisie also agree to the republic.

The spirit of the new republic is characterized by the fact that the oldest and largest of the republican parties did nothing to bring it into being, and was soon to ally itself with the monarchists. This was the Radical Party of Lerroux. Three decades of Spanish parliamentarism are filled with charges of bribery, blackmailing, cheating and trickery against this party. The Radical demagogues had served the monarchy in the struggle against Catalan nationalism. The thievery and blackmail for which their French namesakes (now leading the *Front Populaire*) are so notorious, pale by comparison with the bold campaigns which the Spanish Radicals conducted against individual industrialists and bankers and which came to a sudden end in each case when the expected fat envelope had been quietly delivered. Within the Radical Party the normal method of polemic was mutual accusations of corruption and blackmailing. Because of its extremely filthy history, and despite the fact that it was the oldest and largest bourgeois republican party, there was the strongest opposition to its participation in the first republican government. This opposition came even from those Catholics, like Zamora, who at first seriously wanted the republic and who, having been a Minister under the monarchy, knew best for what class of services Alfonso had used the Radicals.

Despite a great following among the bourgeoisie as the most conservative republican party, Lerroux's Radicals provided no political leadership. They occupied themselves in scrambling for lucrative posts. However, the horror shared by other republicans and socialists, that any touch of scandal should reach the new republic, was a terribly constraining influence on the Radicals. They were happier when they left the government shortly and allied themselves with Gil Robles' clericals—the Radicals, whose chief stock in trade had been anti-clericalism!

The other republican parties, except for the Catalan Left which had peasants in its ranks, were mere makeshifts created for the April elections and had little mass support, for the lower middle class of Spain is tiny and impotent.

The only real support for the republic, therefore, came from the socialist and trade union proletariat. That very fact, however, signified that the republic could be only a transition to a struggle for power between fascist-monarchist reaction and socialism. There was no room, at this late stage, for the democratic republic in Spain.

Unfortunately, however, the socialist leadership did not pre-

pare for the struggle. Instead, it shared the petty-bourgeois outlook of the Azañas.

That outlook was avowedly modeled on the French Revolution of 1789. Spain was presumed to have before it a long course of peaceful development in which the tasks of the bourgeois revolution would be carried out by an alliance between the republicans and the workers. After that—decades after 1931—the republic would be changed into a socialist republic. But that was a long way off! thought the socialist leaders, Prieto, Caballero, de los Rios, Besteiros, del Vayo, Araquistain, who had grown to middle age, at the least, under the almost Asiatic régime of the monarchy. Madrid, chief socialist stronghold, was still much the city of crafts that it had been in the nineties; its socialism was a compound of the provincial reformism of the founder, Pablo Iglesias, and the German Social-Democracy of the worst, the post-war period.

The other major current in the Spanish proletariat, anarcho-syndicalism, commanding in the C.N.T. about half the strength of the socialist U.G.T. unions, dominated the modern industrial city of Barcelona but had changed little since its origin in the Cordoba Congress of 1872. Hopelessly anti-political, it played no rôle in bringing the Republic; then swung in the honeymoon days to a position of passive support, which changed to wild putschism as soon as the rosy haze disappeared. Spain would not find its ideological leadership here. Five years of revolution were needed before anarcho-syndicalism would begin to break with its doctrinaire refusal to enter the political field and fight for a workers' state.

The making of the Soviet Union and its achievements—a peasant country like Spain—were extraordinarily popular in Spain. But the Bolshevik methodology of the Russian Revolution was almost unknown. The theoretical backwardness of Spanish socialism had produced only a small wing for Bolshevism in 1918. What progress it had made by 1930 was cut off by the Comintern's expulsion of practically the whole party for Trotskyist, "Right" and other heresies. Despite the vast backing of the Comintern, the official Communist Party in the ensuing period played no rôle whatever. In March 1932, the Comintern discovered new heresy and wiped out the entire leadership again. Following their "third period" (1929-1934) ideology, the Stalinists denounced united fronts with anarchist or socialist organizations, which they dubbed twins of the fascists; built empty "Red unions" against the C.N.T. and U.G.T.; made empty boasts that they were building peasant Soviets, at a time when they had no following among the proletariat,

which must lead such soviets; propagandized for the "intermediary democratic workers and peasants revolution"—a concept repudiated by Lenin in 1917—as distinct from the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions, thereby hopelessly confusing the task of the struggle for the masses with the subsequent struggle for power. The Stalinists dropped this "third period" hodge-podge in 1935—only to pick up the discredited "People's Front" policy of coalitions with the bourgeoisie. First, and last, they played a thoroughly reactionary rôle.

The real Bolshevik tradition was consistently represented in Spain only by the small group, the Communist Left, adhering to the international "Trotskyist" movement. Trotsky himself wrote two great pamphlets, *The Revolution in Spain* several months before the actual arrival of the republic, and *The Spanish Revolution in Danger* shortly afterward, and many articles as events unfolded. No one can understand the dynamics of the Spanish revolution without reading Trotsky's prophetic analyses. On every basic question events have vindicated his writings. To the pseudo-Jacobin doctrines of official socialism he counterposed a Marxist-Leninist proof, rich in concrete grasp of Spanish conditions, of the impossibility of the bourgeois republic undertaking the democratic tasks of the revolution. To the pseudo-leftist nonsense of the Stalinists, he counterposed the specific program by which a revolutionary party could win the Spanish masses and carry them to a victorious revolution.

But the Communist Left was a tiny handful and not a party. Parties are not built overnight, not even in a revolutionary situation. A group is not a party. The Communist Left, unfortunately, failed to understand this, and did not follow Trotsky in his estimation of the profound significance of the leftward development in the socialist ranks after events confirmed Trotsky's predictions. This "leftism" was followed by an opportunist line leading to signing the Popular Front program. It was only after the present civil war broke out that the former Trotskyists (now in the P.O.U.M.) again turned toward a Bolshevik policy.

Thus, the proletariat was without the leadership to prepare it for its great tasks, when the republic arrived. It was to pay dearly for this lack!

## II.

### THE TASKS OF THE BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Five great tasks confronted the bourgeois republic; these must be carried out, or the régime must give way to reaction, monarchical or fascist, or to a new revolution and a workers' state:

#### I. THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

Agriculture was accounting for over half of the national income, almost two-thirds of exports and most of the government's internal revenue; and with seventy per cent of the population on the land, this was the key question for Spain's future.

The division of the land is the worst in Europe. One third owned by great landowners, in some cases in estates covering half a province. Another third owned by a group of "middle owners," more numerous than the great landowners, but also in large estates tilled by sharecroppers and landworkers. Only one third owned by peasants, and most of this in primitively-equipped farms of five hectares or less of dry, poor land—insufficient to support their families. Such good land as peasants own—in the gardening lands of the Mediterranean coast—is divided into dooryard-size patches.

The five million peasant families fall into three categories:

Two million who own the insufficient holdings. Only in the northern provinces are there any number of peasant families who are moderately comfortable. For the most part, these millions of "owners" starve with the landless, hiring themselves out for day-labor whenever they can.

A million and a half sharecroppers renting on a basis of dividing the crop with the landlord, and subject to the threefold oppression of the landlord, the usurer who finances the crop and the merchant who buys it.

A million and a half landworkers hiring themselves out at incredibly low wages and under the best of conditions out of employment from ninety to one hundred fifty days a year. A *good* wage is six pesetas (75 cents) a day.

The direct exploitation on the land is supplemented by tax squeezing. Of the total tax levy collected from the land in the

first year of the republic, more than one-half came from the land-owning peasants.

The conditions under which millions of peasant families live beggar description. For comparison one must go to the Orient, to the living conditions of the Chinese and Hindu peasantry. Starvation between harvests is a *normal* process. The Spanish press at such times carries numerous reports of whole districts of peasants living on roots and boiled greens. Desperate revolts, seizures of crops, raids on storehouses and periods of guerilla warfare have been part of the history of Spain for a century; but each time it was proven again that the scattered peasantry, without the help of the cities, could not free itself.

The last decades brought the peasant no relief. The halcyon war years, 1914-1918, gave Spanish agriculture an opportunity to enter the world market and secure high prices. The resultant rise in the price of produce and land was capitalized into cash via mortgages by the landowners; the peasants got little of it. The burdens of the collapse of agriculture following the war were, however, quickly shifted onto the peasants. The agricultural crisis, part of the world crisis, aggravated by the tariff barriers raised against Spanish agriculture by England and France, brought the peasant in 1931 to such a plight that whole regions were in danger of extermination by starvation, and with a permanent army of the unemployed on the land.

*The only solution for this dreadful condition was the immediate expropriation of the two-thirds of the land held by landowners, and its division among the peasantry.* Even this would not suffice. With the exception of the gardening regions on the Mediterranean, Spanish agriculture is conducted by primitive methods. Its yield per hectare is the lowest in Europe. Intensive methods of agriculture, requiring training, modern implements, fertilizer, etc., which mean systematic state aid to agriculture, would have to supplement the distribution of the land.

The feudal tenure of the land in France was destroyed by the Jacobins with nothing but benefit to capitalist relations of production. But in Spain of 1931 the land was already exploited under capitalist relations. Land had long been alienable, bought and sold in the market; hence mortgageable and debt-laden. *Hence confiscation of the land would also be confiscation of bank-capital, would be a death-blow to Spanish capitalism, both agricultural and industrial.*

From this perfectly obvious fact, the coalition government drew the conclusion that, therefore, the land could not be confiscated.

Instead, elaborate and futile plans were developed, whereby the government, through its Institute for Agrarian Reform, would purchase the landed estates and parcel them out to the peasants on a rental basis. Since Spain is an impoverished land, providing little income to the State, this process would necessarily be a very long one. The government's own figures showed that its method of dividing the land by purchase would take at least a century.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPANISH INDUSTRY

If the republican-socialist coalition could not solve the agrarian question, could it develop the productive forces of industry and transportation?

Compared to the industry of the great imperialist powers, Spain is pitifully backward. Only 8,500 miles of railroad, in a country larger than Germany! With 1.1% of world trade in 1930, she had slightly less than she had had before the war.

The era of development of Spanish industry was short—1898-1918. The very development of Spanish industry in the war years became a source of further difficulties. The end of the war meant that Spain's industry, infantile and backed by no strong power, soon fell behind in the imperialist race for markets. Even Spain's internal market could not long be preserved for her own industry. Primo de Rivera's insurmountable tariff walls brought from France and England retaliation against Spanish agriculture. With agriculture accounting for one-half to two-thirds of exports, this meant a terrific agricultural crisis followed by the collapse of the internal market for industry. That very crisis, in 1931, ushered in the republic.

These facts stared it in the face, but the republican-socialist coalition repeated, as if it were a magic formula, that Spain was only at the beginning of its capitalist development, that somehow they would build industry and commerce, that the world crisis would let up, etc., etc. The republic found nearly a million unemployed workers and peasants and before the end of 1933 the number was a million and a half, who with their dependents accounted for 25% of the population.

With iron logic the Trotskyists showed that weak Spanish industry, under capitalist relations, *can develop only in an expanding world market, and that the world market has been progressively contracting; Spanish industry can be developed only under protection of a monopoly of foreign trade*, but the pressure of foreign capital in Spain and the threat to agricultural exports

from France and England means that a bourgeois government cannot create a monopoly of foreign trade.

If the lateness of Spanish industry barred its further development under capitalism, that same lateness (like that of Russia) had resulted in a concentration of its proletariat in large enterprises in a few cities. Barcelona, the largest port and also the largest industrial center, with the industrial towns of Catalonia, alone accounts for fully 45% of the Spanish working class. The Biscay region, Asturias and Madrid account for most of the rest. All in all, Spain has less than two million industrial workers, but their specific gravity, in view of their concentration, is comparable to that of the Russian proletariat.

### 3. THE CHURCH

The separation of Church and State was no mere parliamentary task. To achieve separation, the French Revolution confiscated the Church lands, rallying the peasantry for their seizure; dissolved the religious orders, seized the churches and their wealth, and for many years illegalized and prohibited the functioning of the priesthood. Only then was even the inadequate separation of Church and State achieved in France.

In Spain of 1931 the problem was even more urgent and compelling. By its whole past the Church could not but be the mortal enemy of the Republic. For centuries the Church had prevented any form of progress. Even a most Catholic King, Carlos III, had been compelled to expel the Jesuits in 1767; Joseph Bonaparte had to dissolve the religious orders, and the liberal Mendizabel suppressed them in 1835. The Church had destroyed every revolution of the 19th century; in turn every revolution, every quickening of Spanish life, had been necessarily anti-clerical. Even King Alfonso, after the Barcelona revolt of 1909, had to announce that he would "give expression to the public aspirations for the reduction and regulation of the excessive number of religious orders," and would establish religious freedom. Rome, however, changed Alfonso's mind for him. Every attempt at widening the basis of the régime was frustrated by the Church—the last in 1923, when it vetoed Premier Alhucemas' proposal to call a constituent Cortes and instead backed the dictatorship. No wonder that every period of ferment since 1812 has been followed by burning of churches and killing of clericals.

The economic power wielded by the Church can be gauged

from the estimate, given to the Cortes in 1931, that the Jesuit order possessed one-third of the country's wealth. Such lands as had been confiscated after the revolution of 1868 had been so generously indemnified by the reaction, that the Church was launched on a career in industry and finance. Its monopolistic "agricultural credit" banks were the usurers of the countryside and its city banks the partners of industry. The religious orders conducted regular industrial establishments (flour mills, laundries, sewing, clothing, etc.) with unpaid labor (orphans, "students") competing to great advantage against industry. As the established religion it received tens of millions of pesetas each year from the state treasury, was freed of all tax obligations even in industrial production, and received rich fees from baptism, marriage, death, etc.

Its official control of education meant that the student would be safeguarded from radicalism and the peasantry kept illiterate—half the Spanish population could neither read nor write in 1930. The superstition bred by the Church may be realized from the fact that until quite recently papal indulgences sold for a few pesetas each; signed by an archbishop they could be purchased in shops displaying the advertisement: "Bulas are cheap today."

Its robed hordes were a veritable army confronting the republic: eighty to ninety thousand in 4,000 religious houses of the orders, and over 25,000 parish priests—the number in the religious orders alone thus outnumbering the total of high school students and being double the number of college students in the country.

In the first months of the republic the Church moved cautiously in its struggle against the new régime, and advisedly: a pastoral letter advising Catholics to vote for Catholic candidates who were "neither republican nor monarchist" was answered, in May, by mass burning of churches and monasteries. Nevertheless, it was no secret to anyone that the myriad army of monks and nuns and parish priests were vigorously propagandizing from house to house. As in every critical period in Spanish history in which the Church felt itself endangered by a change, it disseminated to the superstitious reports of miraculous incidents—statues seen weeping, crucifixes exuding blood—portents of evil times having come. What would the republican government do about this powerful menace?

The Church question brought the first governmental crisis; Azaña formulated a compromise, which was adopted. The clerical orders were not to be molested unless proven, like any other



organization, detrimental to the commonweal, and there was a gentleman's agreement that this would apply only to the Jesuits, who were dissolved in January 1932, having been given plenty of opportunity to transfer most of their wealth to individuals and other orders. Government subventions to the clergy ended formally with the official declaration of disestablishment but were partly retrieved by payments to the Church for education; for the ousting of the Church from the schools was to be a "long term" program. This was the sum total of the government's Church program. Even this pathetically inadequate legislation created a furor among the bourgeoisie; it was opposed, for example, not only by Ministers Zamora and Maura (Catholics), but by the republican Radical, Lerroix, who had made a lifetime career in Spanish politics out of anti-clericalism. Anti-clerical in words and desiring a fairer division of the spoils, the republican bourgeoisie were so intertwined with capitalist-landowner interests which in turn rested on the Church, that they were absolutely incapable of a serious onslaught on its political and economic power.

The Communist Left declared that this was a further proof of the bankruptcy of the coalition government. It could not even fulfill the "bourgeois-democratic" task of curbing the Church. The revolutionists demanded the confiscation of all Church wealth, the dissolution of all orders, the immediate prohibition of religious teachers in schools, the use of Church funds to aid the peasantry in cultivating the land, and called upon the peasantry to seize the Church lands.

#### 4. THE ARMY

The history of Spain during the nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth century is a history of military plots and *pronunciamentos*. Called in by the monarchy itself to put a period to opposition, the army's privileged rôle led to pampering of an officer caste. So numerous did the officers become that the whole colonial administration and much of that in the country itself (including the police force, the Civil Guard) was entrusted to them. Alfonso's growing need of army support was used by the officers to entrench themselves. The Law of Jurisdictions of 1905, empowering military tribunals to try and punish civilian libels on the army, made labor and press criticism *lèse majesté*. Even Alfonso's Premier Maura, in 1917, protested that the officers were making civil government impossible. In 1919, disapproving

of concessions made to the general strike, the army caste, organized into Officers' Councils for pressure on government and public, demanded the dismissal of the Chief of Police. The War Minister was always one of their men. There was an officer for every six men in the ranks, and the military budget grew accordingly. Indeed, the military budget grew so insupportable that even Rivera tried to cut down the officer caste; the Officers' Councils retaliated by letting him fall without protest, though they had joined him in his original *coup*. Alfonso supported them to the last.

The tradition of an independent and privileged caste was a grave danger for the republic. In a country where the lower middle class is so tiny and undistinguished, the officers have to be drawn from the upper classes, which means that they will be tied by kinship, friendship, social position, etc., to the reactionary landowners and industrialists. Or the officers must be drawn from the ranks, that is from the peasantry and the workers. And haste was needed: control of the army is the life and death question of every régime.

The republican-socialist coalition put this grave problem into the hands of Azaña himself, as Minister of War. He reduced the army by a voluntary system of retirement pay for officers, so reasonable in their eyes that within a few days 7,000 officers agreed to retire with pay. The diminished officer corps remained in spirit what it had been under the monarchy.

The Communist Left denounced this as treachery to the democratic revolution. They demanded dismissal of the whole officer corps and its replacement by officers from the ranks, elected by the soldiers. They appealed to the soldiers to take matters into their own hands, pointing out that the bourgeois republic was treating them just as barbarously as had the monarchy. They sought to draw the soldiers into fraternization and common councils with the revolutionary worker.

The democratization of the army was viewed by the revolutionists as a necessary task, not for the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie—other organs were needed for that—but as a measure of defense against a return of reaction. The failure of the coalition government to undertake this elementary task of the democratic revolution was simply further proof that only the proletarian revolution would solve the “bourgeois-democratic” tasks of the Spanish revolution.

## 5. THE COLONIAL AND NATIONAL QUESTIONS

The "feudal" monarchy had not only been modern enough to foster the rise, development and decline of bourgeois industry and finance. It was ultra-modern enough to embark on seizure and exploitation of colonies in the most contemporary manner of finance-capitalism. The "national renaissance" included the conquest and subjugation of Morocco (1912-1926). In the disaster of Anual (1921) alone, ten thousand workers and peasants, serving under two-year compulsory military service, were destroyed. Seven hundred million pesetas a year was the cost of the Moroccan campaign after the World War. Riots when recruits and reserves were called up and mutinies at embarkation preceded Rivera's *coup*. An alliance with French imperialism (1925) led to a decisive victory over the Moroccan people the next year. A murderously cruel colonial administration proceeded to exploit the Moroccan peasants and tribesmen for the benefit of government and a few capitalists.

The republican-socialist coalition took over the Spanish colonies in Morocco and ruled them, as had the monarchy, through the Foreign Legion and native mercenaries. The socialists argued that when conditions justified they would extend democracy to Morocco and would permit it to participate in the benefits of a progressive régime.

Trotsky and his adherents termed the socialist position an act of treachery against an oppressed people. But for the safety of the Spanish masses, too, Morocco must be set free. The peculiarly vicious legionnaires and mercenaries bred there would be the first force to be used by a reactionary *coup*, and Morocco itself as a military base for the reaction. Withdrawal of all troops and independence for Morocco were immediate demands for which the workers themselves must fight, and incite the Moroccan people to achieve. The liberty of the Spanish masses would be imperiled unless the colonies were freed.

Similar to the colonial question was the issue of *national liberation* of the Catalan and Basque peoples. The strong petty-bourgeois Catalan *Esquerra* (Left) Party derived its chief following from among the militant sharecroppers who should be the allies of the revolutionary workers, but who succumb to the nationalist program of the petty-bourgeoisie, the latter thereby finding a support in the peasantry against the de-nationalizing rôle of big capital and the Spanish state bureaucracy. In the Basque provinces the national question in 1931 led to even more

serious consequences; the nationalist movement there was clerical-conservative in control and returned a bloc of the most reactionary deputies in the Constituent Cortes. Since the Basque and Catalan provinces are also the chief industrial regions, this was a decisive question to the future of the labor movement: how free these workers and peasants from the control of alien classes?

The model for the solution was given by the Russian Bolsheviks, who inscribed in their program the slogan of national liberation, and carried it out after the October revolution. The broadest autonomy for the national regions is perfectly compatible with economic unity; the masses have nothing to fear from such a measure, which in a workers' republic will enable economy and culture to flourish freely.

Any other position than support of national liberation becomes, directly or indirectly, support for the maximum bureaucratic centralisation of Spain demanded by the ruling class, and will be recognized as such by the oppressed nationalities.

Catalonian nationalism had grown under the oppression of the Rivera dictatorship. Hence, a day before the republic was proclaimed in Madrid, the Catalans had already seized the government buildings and declared an independent Catalan republic. A deputation of republican and socialist leaders rushed to Barcelona, and combined promises of an autonomy statute with dire threats of suppression; the final settlement provided a much-restricted autonomy which left the Catalan politicians with grievances they could display with profitable results in the way of maintaining their following among the workers and peasants. On the pretext that the Basque nationalist movement was reactionary, the republican-socialist coalition delayed a settlement of the question and thereby gave the Basque clericals, threatened by the proletarianization of the region, a new hold on the masses. In the name of getting away from regional prejudices, the socialists identified themselves with the outlook of Spanish bourgeois-imperialism.

Thus, in all fields, the bourgeois republic proved absolutely incapable of undertaking the "bourgeois-democratic" tasks of the Spanish revolution. That meant that the republic could have no stability; it could be only a transition stage, and a short one. Its place would be taken either by military, fascist or monarchical reaction—or by a real social revolution which would give the workers power to build a socialist society. The struggle against reaction and for socialism was a single task, and on the order of the day.

### III

## THE COALITION GOVERNMENT AND THE RETURN OF REACTION, 1931-1933

The revolution of 1931 was not a month old when bloody struggles between soldiers and workers took place.

The cardinal-primate's injunction to Catholics to vote "neither monarchist nor republican" led to mass burning of churches. A monarchist club meeting May 10th was hooted by workers, monarchists fired and wounded workers, and with the spread of the news through Madrid, groups of workers started a round-up of monarchists. The fight against Church and monarchists reached such proportions that the workers involved left the factories for some days to carry on the struggle. The socialists joined the republicans in appealing for calm and return to work; the revolutionists demanded extermination of the monarchist organizations and arrest of their leaders. Worse still, the socialists instructed their militia to help the police maintain law and order. In the ensuing struggles the Civil Guard shot ten workers. A delegation of their comrades demanded of the provisional government the dissolution of the Civil Guard. The government's reply was a declaration of martial law and the troops were called out in all the important cities. Alfonso's police and army, its officer caste still weeping for the banished King, solaced themselves with attacks on those who had caused Alfonso to flee. The workers got their first taste of the republic and of socialist participation in a bourgeois government.

In the work of drafting the new constitution, the socialists viewed the republican-socialist coalition as the permanent government of Spain. It was more important to give the Spanish government strong powers than to provide a free hand for anarchist and communist "irresponsibles" to incite the masses to disorder.

Was there any possible justification for the socialist position? The Spanish socialists argued their support of the government was justified because this was a bourgeois revolution, the completion of which could be achieved by a republican government, and that the "consolidation of the republic" was the most immediate task in warding off the return of reaction. In this argument

they echoed the German and Austrian Social-Democracy after the war. But they were flying in the face of the authentic tradition and practice of Marxism.

The revolutions of 1848 had failed, and had been followed by the return of reaction, because of the indecisive course of the petty-bourgeois republicans. Drawing the lessons of 1848, Marx came to the conclusion that the struggle against the return of reaction, as well as the securing of maximum rights for the workers under the new republic, required that in succeeding bourgeois revolutions the proletariat must fight in *organizational and political independence* from the petty-bourgeois republicans.\*

Marx's conceptions of strategy were applied in the Russian Revolution of 1905, in which the proletariat created workers' councils (soviets) constituted by delegates elected from factory, shop and street, as the flexible instrument which unified workers of various tendencies in the struggle against Czarism. The Russian workers followed Marx's advice that no special alliance is necessary with even the most progressive sections of the bourgeoisie: both classes strike at the same enemy, but the proletarian organizations pursue their independent aims without the constriction and unnecessary compromise of an alliance—that is, a common program, which could only be the minimum and therefore a bourgeois program—with the bourgeoisie. In February 1917, the soviets were again created at a time when most Marxists thought the question was merely one of bourgeois revolution.

Thus, even for the "bourgeois" revolution, soviets were neces-

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\* "In the case where a struggle against a common enemy exists, a special kind of alliance is unnecessary. As soon as it becomes necessary to fight such an enemy directly, the interests of both parties fall together for the moment. . . . And then, as soon as victory has been decided, the petty-bourgeoisie will endeavor to annex it for themselves. They will call upon the workers to keep the peace and return to their work in order to avoid (so-called) excesses, and then proceed to cut the workers off from the fruits of victory. . . .

"During the struggle and after the struggle, the workers at every opportunity must put up their own demands in contradistinction to the demands put forward by the bourgeois democrats. . . . They must check as far as possible all manifestations of intoxication for the victory and enthusiasm for the new state of affairs, and must explain candidly their lack of confidence in the new government in every way through a cold-blooded analysis of the new state of affairs. They must simultaneously erect their own revolutionary workers' government beside the new official government, whether it be in the form of executive committees, community councils, workers' clubs or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois democratic government will not only lose its immediate restraint over the workers but, on the contrary, must at once feel themselves watched over and threatened by an authority behind which stand the mass of the workers. In a word: from the first moment of the victory, and after it, the distrust of the workers must not be directed any more against the conquered reactionary party, but against the previous ally, the petty-bourgeois democrats, who desire to exploit the common victory only for themselves." (Marx, "Address to the Communist League" (1850), Appendix 3 to Engel's, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany", London, 1933).

sary. And the German and Austrian revolutions taught very different lessons than those which the Spanish socialists chose to draw. For these revolutions, too, had created soviets; but, dominated by reformists, the soviets had been dissolved as soon as capitalism regained stability. The real lessons of the German and Austrian revolutions were that soviets require a revolutionary program; that as organs without political power they cannot continue to exist indefinitely; that one cannot support both the government and the soviets, as the German and Austrian reformists, like the Russian Mensheviks, tried to do; that soviets can begin as powerful strike committees but must end as organs of state power.

Thus have Marx's conclusions of eighty-six years ago been reinforced by every succeeding revolution.

Thus the course taken by the Spanish socialists from 1931 to 1933 was completely alien to Marxism. "Spain is a republic of workers of all classes." This silly phrase was adopted upon socialist initiative as the first article of the constitution.

The constitution limited voting to those over the age of 23, and set up a method of Cortes elections which favored coalition tickets and made representation of minority parties almost impossible. When this method later worked against them, the socialist leaders confessed it had been instituted on the assumption that the socialist coalition with the republicans would go on indefinitely!

Compulsory military service was made a constitutional provision, as under the monarchy. The President of the Republic was given power to choose the Premier and to dissolve the Cortes twice in a presidential term of six years, and could be removed during his term only by a three-fifths vote of the Cortes. Provision was also made for a Court of Constitutional Guarantees with powers of nullifying legislation equivalent to those of the United States Supreme Court, and for a difficult system of amending the constitution.

Like the Weimar constitution, the Spanish document contained a great deal of phraseology about social rights but with a "joker" (Article 42) providing for suspension of all constitutional rights; there was immediately adopted the "Law for the Defense of the Republic"—copied almost verbatim from the similar German law. It established as "acts of aggression against the republic": spreading of news likely to disturb the public order or credit; denigration of public institutions; illicit possession of arms; unreasonable refusal to work; lightning strikes. Furthermore, the Minister of the

Interior was empowered "in the interests of public order" at any time, to suspend public meetings; to close clubs, associations and unions; to investigate accounts of all associations or unions; to seize illicit arms.

There was also enacted a law continuing Rivera's mixed arbitration boards to settle strikes. "We shall introduce compulsory arbitration. Those workers' organizations which do not submit to it will be declared outside the law," said Minister of Labor Largo Caballero on July 23, 1931. It was made unlawful to strike for political demands, and unlawful to strike unless the workers had presented their demands in writing to the employer ten days before.

Such was the legal structure adopted by the republican-socialist coalition. Not a single deputy voted against it, and it was adopted, December 9, 1931, by 368 ayes and 102 abstentions.

The revolutionists replied by reminding the socialists of the Marxian theory of the state. The Spanish government, regardless of who sits in the cabinet, is a capitalist government. Its powers are powers in the hands of the capitalist class. To give this government the power of suspending constitutional guarantees, or intervening in labor disputes, etc., is an act of treachery against the proletariat. Inevitably these powers will be used against the proletariat.

To limit the voting age to 23 (and this in a southern country where boys of sixteen are active figures in the movement!) is to deprive the working class of a powerful means of drawing into political life the most revolutionary force in the country: the youth. The proletariat least of all need fear the most thorough-going democracy: the electoral scheme means that large sections of the workers and peasantry will not secure representation in the Cortes.

To democratise the bourgeois régime by centering governmental functions in the most representative body, the Cortes, is an elementary tenet of working class policy; to put powers in the hands of a Supreme Court, a president and a cabinet, is a crime against democracy. These smaller bodies are far more susceptible to reactionary influences.

Do we seek to democratise the state so that we shall support it? No! The working class rallies only to its own organizations, its own class organs. The limited possibilities of democratizing the bourgeois state apparatus are important only so far as they



enable us to build, side by side with it, the DUAL POWER of the soviets!

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The bloody clashes of May were only the beginning. "Spreading news likely to disturb the public order or credit" was a description broad enough to cover most anarchist or Marxist criticism. It was not unusual for Azaña's men to confiscate five out of six successive issues of a communist paper. The prohibition of lightning strikes was a deadly blow to syndicalist methods of struggle. Strikes were driven from the field of battle to the debilitating channels of arbitration boards before the workers had a chance to force favorable settlements. Socialist organizers advised C.N.T. strikers they would get better settlements if they joined "the union of the government." The deepening agricultural crisis led landowners to sharper and sharper attacks on the living "standards" of sharecroppers and landworkers; arbitration agreements raising their pay were ignored and the workers were banned from striking while government agents went into interminable investigations and discussions with the landowners.

Unscathed by the meaningless church laws, the clergy raised their heads, and their demands found spokesmen high in the government. When, in August 1931, the Vicar General of Seville was seized illegally crossing the border with documents revealing sale and concealment of Jesuit and other church property, the Catholic Ministers in the provisional government, Maura and Zamora, were able to prevent publication of the documents. Maura retired from the government with the end of the provisional cabinet in December; but Zamora, who wished to retire on the principled ground that he was hostile to the constitutional clauses and the laws dealing with the Church, was persuaded to accept elevation to the Presidency of the Republic by socialist votes. From that exalted post Zamora, from the very first day, aided the clerical forces of reaction.

The socialist, Indalecio Prieto, entered the cabinet as Minister of Finance. At his first move to take control of the Bank of Spain, the government was shaken as by an earthquake. The final "compromise" provided a shifting of cabinet seats, giving the Finance Ministry to a capitalist who named suitable governors for the Bank.

On the last day of the year that ushered in the republic, the peasants of Castilblanco yielded up to the republic the first important group of political prisoners. Meeting with firm resistance an attack by the Civil Guard, the peasant leaders were sent to prison for long terms.

Thereafter, the drama moved to its inexorable ending in reaction. As it became utterly evident that the government's course left reaction not only untouched, but enabled it to grow stronger, the socialist leaders had to speak less of the government's achievements and more of their own organizations. Restive workers were soothed by pointing to the growing numbers in the U.G.T., and to the socialist militia. Revolutionists, however, pointed out that the U.G.T. could not be a bulwark against reaction so long as it supported the government. Struggle against capitalism and support of a bourgeois government are mutually incompatible. The government's prestige is bound up with a record of "maintaining order" so that Minister of Labor Caballero must prevent strikes with the aid of arbitration committees or throttle them if they break out against his will. So, too, the socialist militia: created with the consent of the government and used as an auxiliary to the police, it could be nothing but a display force for parades; a real proletarian militia cannot be pledged to support a bourgeois government nor be limited to the proletarian organizations pledged to loyalty to the régime; it must be a genuinely class weapon which fights for democratic rights without limiting itself to the bounds of bourgeois legality, and which is just as ready to assume the offensive as to fight on the defensive.

In crushing the C.N.T., the troops broadened the repression to the whole working class. Under cover of putting down an anarchist putsch in January 1933, the Civil Guard "mopped up" various groups of trouble-makers. An encounter with peasants at Casas Viejas, early in January 1933, became a *cause célèbre* which shook the government to its foundations and opened the road for reaction.

The counter-revolution had taken to arms (August 10, 1932) in Seville, when General Sanjurjo led troops and Civil Guards for restoration of the monarchy (the movement was smashed by the workers of Seville under revolutionary slogans which alarmed Azaña more than did Sanjurjo). Now the counter-revolution discovered that it could out-do the republicans and socialists in demagogic appeals to the masses. The monarchist and Catholic parties sent their own investigating committee to Casas Viejas; they unearthed a terrible story. Under direct orders from Minister of the Interior Quiroga to "take no prisoners," the Civil Guard had descended on the little village where, after two years of patient waiting for the Institute of Agrarian Reform to divide the neighboring Duke's estate, the peasants had moved in and begun to till the soil for themselves. The peasants scarcely could resist the Civil Guard; they were hunted through the fields like animals; twenty

were destroyed, others wounded. The survivors were warned by government officials to keep quiet unless they wished the same fate.

Azaña had refused to investigate, and delayed interpellations in the Cortes. Finally, the republican-socialist coalition had to face the music. The monarchist-Catholic deputies wept large tears for massacred peasants and shouted themselves hoarse at such a cruel government. When Azaña finally had to admit the truth about Casas Viejas, he sought to shift the blame to the Civil Guards; but they implicated Quiroga himself. Through it all, the socialist deputies sat silent, and voted a motion of confidence in Azaña-Quiroga. The reactionaries had a real field day: to Casas Viejas they added denunciation of the government for its oppression of the labor press and the large number of political prisoners, mostly workers, in the jails (9,000 was one communist estimate in June 1933). The reactionaries even submitted to the Cortes a bill providing amnesty for all political prisoners, to the enthusiastic vivas of the anarchists.

The workers and, above all, the peasantry were thoroughly bewildered by this bold and successful demagogy. Who were their friends? The republican-socialists had promised land but did not give it. "What did the republic give you to eat?" The republic had killed and jailed the brave peasants of Castilblanco and Casas Viejas. In vain did the socialists argue and plead—the peasants knew their own misery.

The end came quite quickly. In June 1933, Zamora tried to dismiss the coalition but was out-maneuvered, while the socialists announced that any further attempt would be met by a general strike. It proved an empty threat. It is doubtful whether the bewildered and discouraged workers would have responded to a call; they had been held in leash too long! Three months later, Zamora struck again, dismissing the cabinet and simultaneously dissolving the Cortes. Lerroux was appointed Premier.

The elections were held in November; the victory of the coalition of reactionaries and rightists was decisive. The socialists offered many explanations: the embittered anarchists had effectively campaigned for a boycott of the elections; the communists had run separate tickets; the women were under clerical influence and voting the first time; the socialists—running independent tickets in most places, under the pressure of the rank and file—fell victim to their own stupid provisions for electoral machinery; the local bosses and landowners terrorized the villages and bought votes; the elections were fraudulent in many places, etc., etc. But this was a poor alibi and its details, indeed, were proof of the failure

of the republican-socialist coalition to win and inspire the masses or to crush the reaction in two and a half years of rule. The cold statistics are that, of 13 million eligibles, 8 million voted and more than half of them voted for the rightist coalition, the "anti-Marxist front," and another million voted for center parties. The petty-bourgeois republicans were wiped out, returning but seven deputies, most of them, like Azaña, owing their election to socialist votes.

As a witness for our analysis of the causes of the victory of reaction, we introduce Indalecio Prieto. In a mood of extreme honesty and frankness, on fleeing to Paris after the October 1934 revolt, Prieto told *Le Petit Journal*, in answer to the question, "How do you explain the discontent in Spain, and the success of Gil Robles in the last elections?":

"Precisely because of the right policy of the left régime," said Prieto. "This government born with the republic and created by the republic became the rampart of forces adverse to the republic. It is true that the left government of Spain carried out the policy of the right before Lerroux and Samper. In this period of perishing capitalism, the Spanish bourgeoisie could not carry through even the bourgeois-democratic revolution."

#### IV.

### THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM: NOVEMBER 1933 TO FEBRUARY 1936

Though governmental crises changed cabinet personnel six times during the next two years, Lerrox's Radicals remained ostensibly at the helm, with either Lerrox or his lieutenants—Samper, Martinez Barrios—as Premier. The Radicals gave a pledge to the left that no Gil Robles man would enter the cabinet. Actually, this arrangement was dictated by Gil Robles. He had studied the methods of Hitler and Mussolini, and felt he dared not openly take power until his fascist movement had acquired a mass base.

It was certainly fitting that this degenerate and reactionary régime should be led by the Radicals, to whose malodorous history we have already referred. A party of such grotesque buffoonery ("Every Nun a Mother!" had been a Lerrox slogan) could exist only so long as capitalist and proletarian camps did not lock in mortal combat; it was soon to dissolve, its finish occasioned, appropriately enough, by a series of scandalous revelations of financial peculations involving the whole party leadership. But for the "bienio negro," the two black years, its cynical satyrs served the austere clericals as Premiers and Ministers.

The legal structure provided by the republican-socialist coalition proved most useful to Lerrox-Gil Robles. Over a hundred issues of *El Socialista* were seized within a year. The Socialist International estimated in September 1934 a total of 12,000 imprisoned workers. The socialist militia was proscribed and its arms confiscated. Workers' meeting halls were closed and their union accounts scanned to discover use of funds for revolutionary purposes. Socialists and other workers elected in the municipal councils were removed. All the laws which the socialists had thought to use against "irresponsibles" were now used against them.

Gil Robles' main problem was to secure a mass base, a difficult task because Spain has an extremely small middle class. Outside of the small group of prosperous peasant-owners in the North—Basque and Navarra—where a force similar to the Austrian clerical-fascist militia was organized, Gil Robles would have much difficulty in recruiting from the lower classes. There were, how-

ever, the million and a half unemployed city and land workers: to win them, Gil Robles introduced a bill providing unemployment benefits, seeking to exploit the fact that the unemployed had been neglected by the republican-socialist government. The clericals set up a program of government re-forestation, the work camps being schools for fascism. They set up a youth movement, a "Christian Trade Union Movement" and a "Christian Peasants Movement." Gil Robles even frightened his allies, the landowners of the Agrarian Party, with talk of dividing up the big estates. Even to unfriendly observers it appeared that Gil Robles was rolling up a mass following. But when, after months of patient labor and huge expenditure, the clerical-fascists attempted to show results by marshalling great mass gatherings, they were smashed and disintegrated by the socialist proletariat.

Why? It is true that clerical fascism was often inept. Nevertheless, the lack of a convincing demagogy had not prevented clerical-fascism from smashing the proletariat in Austria. Spanish clerical-fascism did not succeed for the reason that the proletariat, unlike that of Germany, did fight and, unlike the Austrians, fought before it was too late.

For the Spanish proletariat evidenced a real determination not to allow itself to be beaten by fascism. The leftward evolution of the international social-democracy after the defeats of Germany and Austria, came in Spain more rapidly than elsewhere. Caballero joined the left wing, of which the Socialist Youth, deeply critical of both the Second and Third Internationals, was the mainstay. The left wing declared for preparing the proletarian revolution, to be achieved by armed insurrection. The center wing of the party, led by Prieto and Gonzales Pena, publicly pledged, in the Cortes, that any attempt at a fascist régime would be met by armed revolution. Only a small right wing under Besteiros refused to learn from Austria and Germany. In the U.G.T., Caballero introduced a régime of bold struggle and the right-wing socialists who objected were forced to resign from its executive. Precisely because they had been so ideologically dependent on the Kautskys and Bauers, the fall of their teachers enabled the Spanish socialists to make an extraordinarily sharp break with their past. The bourgeoisie, reading proletarian politics by way of bourgeois analogies, thought this was all bluff—until they were scared into conviction by the discovery of large depots of arms in socialist homes and buildings.

With the Socialist Party ready to struggle, the fight against fascism was enormously facilitated, indeed it is not too much to

say that only the leftward turn of the Socialist Party made possible, under the existing conditions, the victory over fascism. To have rallied the masses *in spite of* the socialists, would have required a revolutionary party of such calibre and mass proportions as simply did not exist in Spain.

It proved impossible, however, to instill the Socialist Party with the Marxist conception of the insurrection. Even the best of the left socialist leaders held an extremely narrow conception. In pseudo-leftist terms similar to those of the anarchists and the "third-period" Stalinists, the socialists affirmed themselves no longer interested in the course of bourgeois-republican politics—as if the revolution cannot take advantage of, cannot influence, the course of bourgeois politics! For example: the rightists had carried Catalonia in the November elections, but such was the resurgence of the masses that, only two months later, the left bloc swept the Catalonian municipal elections. The November defeat created a crisis within the C.N.T., part of the leadership demanding an end to boycotting all elections. Hence, a socialist campaign demanding dissolution of the Cortes and new elections could have aided the socialists in rallying the masses, could have torn syndicalists away from the anarchists, could have driven a wedge between Gil Robles and many supporters of Lerroux. Apparently, however, the socialists were afraid of not being left enough.

The broad character of the proletarian insurrection was explained by the Communist Left (Trotskyist). It devoted itself to efforts to build the indispensable instrument of the insurrection: workers' councils constituted by delegates representing all the labor parties and unions, the shops and streets; to be created in every locality and joined together nationally; a veritable mass leadership which as it functioned would succeed in drawing to it all non-party, non-union and anarchist workers seriously desirous of fighting against capitalism. Unfortunately, the socialists failed to understand the profound need of these Workers' Alliances. The bureaucratic traditions were not to be so easily overcome; Caballero, no more than Prieto, could understand that the mass leadership of the revolution must be broader than the party leadership; the socialist leaders thought that the Workers' Alliances meant that they would have merely to share leadership with the Communist Left and other dissident communist groups. Thus, though the Communist Left was persuasive enough to achieve their creation in Asturias and Valencia, and they nominally existed in Madrid and elsewhere, actually in most cases they were merely "top" committees, without elected or

lower-rank delegates, that is, little more than liaison committees between the leadership of the organizations involved; and even these were never completed by being joined together through a national committee.

Incredible as it may seem, the fascist scribbler, Curzio Malaparte's "*Technique of the Coup D'état*," had a great vogue among the socialist leaders. They actually thought Malaparte's preposterous dialogues between Lenin and Trotsky, elaborating a purely putchist conception of seizure of power by small groups of armed men, were genuine transcripts! The socialists seemed to be completely ignorant of the rôle of the masses in the October revolution of 1917. They failed to tell the masses what the coming revolution would mean to them. Though leading, in June 1934, a general strike of landowners involving nearly half a million, the socialists did not cement the bond between city and country by rallying the city workers to their aid with pickets and funds; nor was the strike used to systematically propagate the slogan of seizure of the land, although during those same months peasant seizures of land reached their highest peak. As a result, when the bitter strike ended without victory, the class-consciousness of the landworkers, always so much weaker than that of the industrial proletariat, was so shaken that they played no rôle at all in the October insurrection. Nor was the city proletariat prepared to seize the factories and public institutions, and impregnated with the conviction that it was up to them to overthrow capitalism and begin building the new order. Instead, the socialists hinted darkly of their complete preparations to effect the revolution themselves.

In their partial struggles against the fascist menace, however, the socialists acquitted themselves magnificently. Gil Robles put his greatest efforts on three carefully-planned concentrations: that at Escorial, near Madrid, on April 22, 1934; that of the Catalonian landowners in Madrid on September 8th against liberal tenancy laws adopted by the Catalonian government, and that on September 9th at Covadongas, Asturias. Not one of these was successful. The workers declared general strikes covering each area; street car rails were torn up; trains were stopped; food and accommodations were made impossible; roads were blocked by barricades, and with fists and weapons the reactionaries were turned back and dispersed. The small groups of wealthy young bloods and their servants, clergy and landowners, who managed to get through with the aid of the army and Civil Guard, presented such a ludicrous contrast to the forces of their



opponents that the clerical fascist claim to represent all Spain received an irreparable blow.

The workers' opposition was re-inforced by the struggle for national liberation. Moves against its semi-autonomous status roused the Catalonian nation; Companys, still in power, had to endorse a series of huge demonstrations against Gil Robles. Finally, the nationalist deputies left the Cortes altogether. Reactionary centralization even drove the conservative Basques into hostility; their municipal councils, in August 1934, met and decided to refuse all collaboration with the government; Lerroix' answer, the arrest of all Basque mayors, only intensified the crisis.

The clerical-fascists dared wait no longer. They had failed to build a mass base; but with every day the opposition grew stronger. The disunity within the workers' ranks was slowly but surely tending to disappear. Despite Lerroix' clever game of gentle treatment for the C.N.T., in order to re-inforce the anti-political elements who were arguing that all governments were equally bad and Lerroix' government no worse than the last, socialist proposals were beginning to meet with acceptances; in a number of strikes the C.N.T. cooperated with the U.G.T. and in several places, notably in Asturias, the anarchists had entered the Workers' Alliances.

Even the Stalinists were compelled to come along. Since November 1933, they had met each socialist step to the left by the foulest kind of invective. Kuusinen, official reporter at the 13th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, December 1933, accused the Spanish socialists of taking part "in the preparation for establishing a fascist dictatorship." "There are no disagreements between the fascists and the social-fascists as far as the necessity for the further fascisation of the bourgeois dictatorship is concerned," said the E.C.C.I. "The social-democrats are in favor of fascisation provided the parliamentary form is preserved. . . . What is worrying these people is that in their furious zeal the fascists may hasten the doom of capitalism. The fascisation of social-democracy is proceeding at an accelerated pace." (*Inprecorr*, vol. 14, p. 109.) When in April 1934 the secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, Balbontin, resigned because the Communist International refused to sanction a united front, he was answered: "The social-fascists have to maintain the illusion among the working masses that they are 'enemies' of fascism, and that there is a great struggle between socialism and fascism, as some petty-bourgeois counter-revolutionaries (Balbontin) want to make the workers believe." (*Ibid*, p. 545.) In June

1934, when the socialist Juanita Rico was killed by fascists in Madrid, the Communist Party had to accept the socialist invitation for participation in the mass funeral. But on July 12 it rejected a socialist invitation for joint action and entry into the Workers' Alliances, and declared that "our correct united front tactics enabled us to frustrate the counter-revolutionary plans of the Workers' Alliance." But by September 12 the pressure from its own ranks was irresistible, its delegates taking their seats in the Alliances on September 23—just a few days before the armed struggle began. If the chief exponents of the theory of social-fascism had to join the proletarian united front, the anarchist-led workers of the C.N.T. would soon take the same road. Gil Robles dared wait no longer; he struck.

Zamora named Lerrox to form a new cabinet; three of Gil Robles' nominees entered it. The socialists had declared they would answer such a move with arms. If they now retreated, the initiative would pass to Gil Robles, the masses would be demoralized. The socialists took up the challenge within six hours. At midnight of October 4, the Workers' Alliances and the U.G.T. declared a nationwide general strike.

The stirring events of the next fifteen days are well-enough known not to be repeated here. Despite the absence of real soviets, the lack of clarity concerning the goal of the struggle, the failure to call the peasants to take the land and the workers to seize the factories, the workers heroically threw themselves into the struggle. The backbone of the struggle was broken, however, when the refusal of the C.N.T. railroad workers to strike enabled the government to transport goods and troops. The few hours between the general strike call and the mobilization of the workers' militia was sufficient delay to enable the government to arrest the soldiers who were depended upon to split the army; the failure to arm the workers beforehand could not be made up for within a few hours, while government troops and police were raiding every likely building. There were many outright betrayals of arms depots; many key men fled when victory appeared out of the question. In Catalonia, which should have been the fortress of the uprising, dependence on the petty-bourgeois government of Companys proved fatal; more fearful of arming the workers than of capitulating to Gil Robles, Companys broadcast reassuring statements until, surrounded by Madrid troops, he abjectly surrendered.

And yet, in spite of all this, the workers put up a tremendous struggle. In Madrid, Bilbao and other cities, armed clashes went no further than guerilla sniping by the workers; but the general

strikes were carried on for a long period, sustained by the proletariat with exemplary enthusiasm and discipline, and paralyzing industrial and commercial life as no previous struggle had ever done in Spain. The greatest and most glorious struggle took place in Asturias. Here the Workers' Alliances were most nearly like soviets, and had been functioning for a year under socialist and Communist Left leadership. Pena and Manuel Grossi led the miners, who made up for lack of arms by dynamite, tool of their trade, in a victorious insurrection. The "Workers and Peasants Republic" of Asturias gave the land to the peasants, confiscated the factories, tried their enemies in revolutionary tribunals, and for fifteen historic days held off the Foreign Legion and Moorish troops. There is a saying in Spain that had there been three Asturiases, the revolution would have been successful. Only the failure of the rebellion elsewhere enabled the government to concentrate its full force on Asturias.

Nor did there follow a period of pessimism in the workers' ranks. On the contrary, there was widespread recognition that they had not been defeated in a general engagement; the masses had merely gone on strike and confined their fighting to driving off scabs; their ranks were still intact. They would fight again very soon, and this time would know better how to fight. The dread story of how 3,000 Asturian workers had been slaughtered, most of them after surrender, only served to steel the determination of the masses. Gil Robles' attempts to seize workers' headquarters, close down unions, confiscate funds, met with the fiercest resistance. To take the place of the confiscated labor press, illegal organs sprang up and were openly circulated. Executions of October prisoners were met with general strikes. Numerous economic strikes demonstrated the unshaken morale of the proletariat. On May 1, 1935, despite the most frenzied efforts of the government, there was a complete stoppage of work, an absolute paralysis of everything except the public services manned by government troops. The amnesty campaigns, for reprieves of condemned men and release of the prisoners, drew in large sections of the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie: the cry of "*Amnistia, amnistia!*" drew hitherto untouched layers into political life. The Radical-clerical régime began to crack.

President Zamora himself dared go no further. Before the struggle was over, he commuted the death sentences of the Catalan chiefs. The Radical Party split, the perspicacious Martinez Barrios—who as Premier in December 1933 ferociously crushed an anarchist putsch—leading an anti-fascist grouping, and joining with

Azaña and other republicans, in May, to fight for amnesty. Lerroux himself now retreated, reprieving Pena and 18 other condemned socialists, on March 29; when Gil Robles retaliated by driving his cabinet out of office, Lerroux was named Premier again by Zamora and dissolved the Cortes for a month in which the Radicals ruled alone; on May 4, Lerroux again formed a cabinet with clerical-fascists, this time with Gil Robles himself as Minister of War, but May Day had already made clear the turn of the tide. We now know that Gil Robles then took over the War Ministry for the purpose of preparing the army, arms depots and secret emplacements around Madrid, for the struggle which is now waging, and therefore knew as well as anybody that he would soon be ousted.

Great anti-fascist rallies took place around the demand for dissolution of the Cortes and new elections. Meetings of a hundred thousand, of two hundred thousand, became regular occurrences. Within the working class, the sentiment for unity was the dominant note. Terribly discredited for their refusal to join the October revolt, the anarchists sought to apologize by pointing to the repressions they were undergoing at the time from Companys and asserted they were ready to join with socialists in the struggle for freedom; Angel Pestana led a split and organized the Syndicalist Party for participation in the coming elections; and even the C.N.T. leadership made it clear they would let their followers vote against the semi-fascist régime. With the tide, most of the bourgeois press turned against Gil Robles. It needed only the final touch of financial scandal involving the Lerroux government. The clerical-fascists had arrived at an impasse; they had to retreat.

They had no idea, however, of the extent of the tidal wave which was to sweep over them. They thought that the February elections would give the balance of power to center groups. So, too, thought Azaña who, eight days before the elections, sought a postponement, fearing the republican-workers' coalition had not had enough time for its propaganda. But the masses of peasants and workers, men and women, had their say. They swept the semi-fascist régime away. And not only at the polls. With the posting of the election returns, the masses came out on the streets. Within four days of the elections Azaña was again at the head of the government and again crying for peace, for the workers to go back to work, banishing any spirit of vengeance. Already he was repeating the phrases, and pursuing the policies of 1931-1933!

## V.

### THE PEOPLE'S FRONT GOVERNMENT AND ITS SUPPORTERS: FEBRUARY 20 TO JULY 17, 1936

*Who are the criminals and traitors responsible for making it possible that, five months after the February days in which the workers drove the clerical-fascists from the government and the streets, the reactionaries can lead the army and police in such a powerful counter-revolution?*

Every serious communist and socialist wants to know the answer to this paramount question, for it has significance not only for Spain, and for France where a similar development is taking place, but for the policies of the proletariat throughout the world.

The answer is: the criminals and traitors are the "left" republican government and its supporters, the Communist Party and the reformist socialists.

When the February elections approached, the left wing socialists were opposed to a joint election ticket with the republicans, because they did not believe the republicans had any real following, and because of the hatred of the masses for these men: Companys' Catalan *Esquerra* had been guilty of treachery in the October revolt; Martinez Barrios' "Republican Union" was merely the remnant of Lerroux' Radicals, singing a new tune for the occasion; Azaña and his left republicans had repudiated the October revolt and admittedly were nothing but a handful of intellectuals. The left socialists were especially outraged when Prieto and the Communist Party agreed to give these republicans a majority in the joint election tickets: the tickets that carried gave the republicans 152 deputies to 116 for the workers' organizations!

But this was not the real crime. Voting blocs for purely electoral purposes are not a matter of principle for revolutionists, although extremely seldom are they warranted by tactical considerations. But such voting agreements must be limited *solely* to the exchange of votes. Before, during and after the election, the proletarian party continues to speak from its *own* platform, with its *own* program, explaining to the workers that it *cannot* arrive at any agreement on *program* with its temporary electoral allies. For a so-called "common program" could be, and was in fact,

only the program of the class enemy. This was the real crime, that the Spanish workers' organizations underwrote and guaranteed another charter for the bourgeoisie, necessarily identical with that of 1931-1933.

Prieto forgot that he had said: "In this period of perishing capitalism, the Spanish bourgeoisie could not even carry through the bourgeois-democratic revolution." The Communist Party, slavishly obeying the new international orientation, wiped out its 1931-1933 criticism of the impossibility of the bourgeoisie undertaking the democratic tasks of the revolution, and declared the coalition with the bourgeoisie would carry out these tasks!\*

The People's Front program was a basically reactionary document:

1. *The agrarian question.* The program states: "The republicans do not accept the principle of the nationalization of the land and its free distribution to the peasants, solicited by the delegates of the Socialist Party." Instead, it promises stimulation of exports, credits, security of tenure for tenants and state purchase of estates for rental to peasants. In other words, the program of 1931, which had already been proven a cruel joke.

2. *Expansion of Spanish economy.* It promises a more efficient system of protective tariffs, institutions to guide industry (a department of commerce, labor, etc.), putting the treasury and the banks at the service of "national reconstruction, without slurring over the fact that such subtle things as credit cannot be forced outside of the sure field of profitable and remunerative effort. The republican parties do not accept the measures of nationalization of the banks proposed by the workers' parties." "Great plans" of public works. "The republicans do not accept the subsidy to unem-

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\* To inveigle the left socialists into the coalition, the Stalinists talked very "left": "The Communist Party knows the danger of Azaña just as well as the Socialists who collaborated with him when he was in power. They know that he is an enemy of the working class. . . . But they also know that the defeat of the CEDA (Gil Robles) would automatically bring with it a certain amount of relief from the repression, for a time at least." (*Inprecorr*, vol. 15, p. 762.) But did the Stalinists propose, then, that once Azaña was in power, the workers should struggle against him? On the contrary. This "enemy of the workers" would fulfill the basic democratic tasks: "land to the peasants, freedom to the oppressed nationalities," "free Morocco from imperialist oppression." (*Ibid*, p. 639.) In order to justify this open espousal of the Menshevik conception of the bourgeois revolution, the Stalinists had to blacken their own past: Garcia, at the Seventh Congress, denounced the party's leadership of 1931: "Instead of advancing slogans which corresponded to the moment, they expressed themselves against the republic concerning which there were very strong illusions among the masses of the people, and advanced the slogans, 'Down with the bourgeois republic,' 'Long live the Soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat.' With the expulsion of these renegades (in 1932), our Spanish party began to live and work in a communist manner." (*Ibid*, p. 1310.) But these slogans had been raised not only by the "renegades," but by the party itself, up to the beginning of 1935, by Ercoli, Pieck and the Comintern itself!

ployment (dole) solicited by the workers' delegation. They believe that the measures of agrarian policy and those which are to be carried out in industry, public works and, in sum, the whole plan of national reconstruction, will fulfill not only its own ends but also the essential task of absorbing unemployment." This, too, like 1931.

3. *The Church.* Only the section on education affects the clergy. The Republic "shall impel with the same rhythm as in the first years of the Republic the creation of primary schools. . . . Private education shall be subject to vigilance in the interest of culture analogous to that of the public schools." We know, from the story of 1931-1933, what rhythm that was!

4. *The army.* The only section that affects the army is that promising investigation and punishment of police abuses under the reaction and dismissal of commanding officers found guilty. Not even the lip-service to democratization of the army which was given in 1931! Thus, the officers' corps is left intact. And in the five months that followed, the People's Front government put off any investigation of the Asturian massacres or other crimes perpetrated by the officers' corps!

5. *The colonial and national questions.* Not a word in the Popular Front program. Morocco remained in the hands of the Foreign Legionnaires until they finally took it over completely on July 18. The semi-autonomous statutes of Catalonia were later restored, but further autonomy not granted. A less liberal arrangement for the Basques.

6. *Democratization of the state apparatus.* Mixed labor boards, Supreme Court, president, censorship, etc.—all were restored as in 1931. The program promised reorganization of the labor boards so that "the interested parties may acquire a consciousness of the impartiality of their decisions"! And, as a final slap in the face, "The republican parties do not accept the workers' control solicited by the socialist delegation."

For this mess of pottage the workers' leaders abdicated the class struggle against the bourgeois republic.

Think of it! The very program for the sake of which the Stalinists and socialists pledged to support the bourgeois republican government, made inevitable the onslaught of reaction. The economic foundations of reaction were left untouched, in land, industry, finance, the Church, the army, the State. The lower courts were hives of reaction; the labor press is filled, from February to July, with accounts of fascists caught red-handed and let free, and workers held on flimsy charges. On the day the counter-revolution

broke out, the prisons of Barcelona and Madrid were filled with thousands of political prisoners—workers, especially from the C.N.T., but also many from the U.G.T. The administrative bureaucracy was so rotten with reaction that it fell apart on July 18. The whole diplomatic and consular corps, with a handful of exceptions, went over to the fascists.

The government “impartially” imposed a rigid press censorship, modified martial law, prohibition of demonstrations and meetings unless authorized—and at every critical moment authorization was withdrawn. In the critical days after the assassinations of Captain Castillo and Calvo Sotelo, the working-class headquarters were ordered closed. The day before the fascist outbreak the labor press appeared with gaping white spaces where the government censorship had lifted out editorials and sections of articles warning against the *coup d'état*!

In the last three months before July 18, in desperate attempts to stop the strike movement, hundreds of strikers were arrested in batches, local general strikes declared illegal and socialist, communist, anarchist headquarters in the regions closed for weeks at a time. Three times in June the Madrid headquarters of the C.N.T. was closed and its leadership jailed.

The Stalinist and socialist leaders found it impossible to restrain the hatred of their following for this repetition of 1931-1933. Even that most vociferous supporter of the government, Jose Diaz, secretary of the Communist Party, had to admit:

“The government, which we are loyally supporting in the measure that it completes the pact of the Popular Front, is a government that is commencing to lose the confidence of the workers.” And then he adds this most significant admission: “And I say to the left republican government that its road is the wrong road of April 1931.” (*Mundo Obrero*, July 6, 1936.)

Thus, in the very moment of pleading with the Asturian miners not to break with the Popular Front, Jose Diaz had to admit that February-July 1936 was a repetition of the disaster of 1931-1933! When the counter-revolution broke out, the Stalinists asserted that they had not ceased throughout to urge upon the government the necessity of smashing reaction. We have already seen, however, that the Popular Front program protected reaction on every important front.

No urging can change the republican bourgeoisie. Such a coalition government, committed to maintenance of capitalism, must act as Azaña does both in 1931 and in 1936. The government behaves identically in both cases because its program is one of



building a Spanish economy under capitalism. That means: *it cannot touch the economic foundations of reaction because it does not want to destroy capitalism.* Azaña's basic program is put succinctly enough in two phrases soon after he came back to power: "No vengeance"; "Gil Robles too will one day be an Azañista." This program is not dictated by psychological weakness but by Azaña's capitalist premises. His government has not been weak, it has made no "mistakes." It has permitted the reactionaries full scope for arming and mobilizing because that is an inevitable consequence of the capitalist nature of the Popular Front program.

Trotsky has laid bare the anatomy of the People's Front government's relation to reaction:

"The officers' corps represents the guard of capital. Without this guard the bourgeoisie could not maintain itself for a single day. The selection of the individuals, their education and training make the officers, as a distinctive group, uncompromising enemies of socialism. That is how things stand in all bourgeois countries. . . . To eliminate four or five hundred reactionary agitators from the army means to leave everything basically as it was before. . . . It is necessary to replace the troops in the barracks commanded by the officers' caste with the people's militia, that is, with the democratic organization of the armed workers and peasants. There is no other solution. But such an army is incompatible with the domination of exploiters big and small. Can the republicans agree to such a measure? Not at all. The People's Front government, that is to say, the government of the coalition of the workers with the bourgeoisie, is in its very essence a government of capitulation to the bureaucracy and the officers. Such is the great lesson of the events in Spain, now being paid for with thousands of human lives."

Just as socialist support of the government in 1933 made impossible the warding off of reaction, so communist-socialist support in 1936 opened the gates for the counter-revolution. But, workers may ask, could they not, while supporting the government, also mobilize the workers and peasants against their enemies? No! Two important examples must suffice:

1. In Albacete province, near Yeste, the peasants seized a big estate. On May 28, 1936, they were attacked by the Civil Guard, 23 peasants killed and 30 wounded. The Minister of Interior greeted this blood-bath by sending a telegram of congratulations to the Civil Guard. The press correctly termed the situation a repetition of that in the Casas Viejas massacre of 1933. The interpellations in the Cortes on June 5 were awaited with bated

breath . . . but the communist and socialist deputies proceeded to absolve the government of all responsibility. "We know that the government is not responsible for what has happened, and that it will take measures to prevent its repetition, but these measures must be taken speedily in the interests of the People's Front," said a socialist deputy." "The plot is clear," said the Stalinists:

"The landowners systematically drive the peasants to desperation and when the peasants take means to help themselves the landowners find venal civil guards prepared to shoot them down. The Civil Guard has carried out a blood-bath and the politicians of the right are doing their best to exploit this happening in order to destroy the People's Front. Politically, the Yeste affair was unsuccessful, but it can and will be repeated. . . . The Communist Party was right when it countered the political maneuver of the right by placing the affair on its real basis and demanding that action should be taken against the rich landowners. It pointed out that a struggle must be conducted above all against misery and starvation, which is increased by the caciques and landowners when they sabotage the orders of the government and the republic and refuse the masses bread. *The Communist Party did this by demanding that the agrarian reforms should be accelerated.*" (*Inprecorr*, No. 32, July 11, 1936, p. 859.)

In plain words: the struggle against the landowners should be confined to attempts to persuade the government to agrarian reform. Because further struggles of the peasantry, by themselves, in militant action, on the land, which is the only real form of action, lead to events like Yeste, which cause conflict between the masses and the government, and we must avoid breaking the People's Front. "Not breaking the People's Front" can mean only to limit the struggle to friendly persuasion in the arena of parliament!

2. The construction workers of Madrid, over 80,000 strong, went on strike, their main demand being a 36-hour week. The government ordered the workers to arbitrate; and decided on a 40-hour week. The U.G.T. and the communists agreed and instructed their followers to return to work. The C.N.T., however, refused to accept the government settlement and, what is more, the U.G.T. workers followed the anarchists. The Stalinists gave the following "reasons" for calling off the strike:

"It is a secret to nobody that after the 16th of February the fascist bosses introduced into their forms of struggle that of pushing the workers to declare conflicts, first, and to pro-

long their solution afterward, as far as necessary and possible, in order to drive the masses to desperation, which would take the form of sporadic acts without finality or effectiveness . . . but which would confront the workers with the government, because this is one of the conditions . . . for a *coup d'état*. . . . This attitude of the bosses . . . makes it necessary that the construction workers, even though not satisfied with the settlement, put an end to a situation the prolongation of which involves a grave danger for all workers. . . . The moment has arrived to know how to end the strike, without renouncing the possibility created by the settlement of continuing to discuss in the mixed labor board the problem of salaries." (*Mundo Obrero*, July 6.)

In plain words: the bosses insist on fighting you, but this brings you in conflict with the government—which means that the government has more in common with the bosses than with you!—and endangers the People's Front. Therefore: end the strike. But then, why start strikes? However, the logic of reformism does not always go that far, because then the workers would repudiate it altogether. The workers, alas, insist on striking. The duty of the Communist Party is to stop the strike before the government gets mad. . . .

This policy of confining the struggle against reaction to the parliamentary arena could mean only the eventual defeat of the masses. For it is a cardinal tenet of Marxism that *the mobilization of the masses can take place only through militant struggle*. Had the workers followed the Popular Front policy, we would today be mourning the downfall of the Spanish proletariat.

## VI.

### THE MASSES STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM DESPITE THE PEOPLE'S FRONT: FEB. 16 TO JULY 16, 1936

Fortunately for the future of the Spanish and the international working class, the masses from the first day of the February victory gave no indication of ceasing the struggle. The lessons of 1931-1933 had been burned into their consciousness. If they now, for the moment, were free of the domination of Gil Robles, they had won that freedom, arms in hand, in spite of the treachery of Companys and the "neutrality" of Azaña. The masses did not wait for Azaña to fulfill his promises. In the four days between the elections and Azaña's hasty entry into the government, the masses effectively carried out the amnesty by tearing open the jails; so effectively, in fact, that the Permanent Committee of the old Cortes, including Gil Robles, thereafter unanimously ratified Azaña's amnesty decree, both for fear of the masses in the streets and in order to make it appear that the constituted government remained in control of Spain. Nor did the workers wait for the government decree, and for the decision as to its constitutionality—which came from the Court of Constitutional Guarantees only on September 6!—to get back the jobs of those dismissed after the October revolt; in every shop and factory the workers took along those dismissed and confronted the employers: "Either, or!" Whatever fixing of responsibility for the excesses of October was done, was by the "plebian method" of the aroused workers and peasants. The Stalinist and right wing socialist deputies shouted themselves hoarse, pleading with the workers to leave all this to the People's Front government. The workers knew better!

The hated clergy, rulers of the "black two years," were also dealt with in the time-honored manner of oppressed peasants. Especially after it was clear the government would not touch the clergy, the masses took matters into their own hands. This consisted not only of burning churches, but of ordering the priests to leave the villages under sentence of death if they returned. Out of abject loyalty to the government, the Stalinists vilified the struggle against the clergy: "Remember that the setting fire to churches and monasteries brings support to the counter-revolution!" (*Inprecorr*, August 1, p. 928.) They were listened to no

more than was Azaña. In the province of Valencia, where the workers have now smashed the counter-revolution so decisively, there was scarcely a functioning church in June.

In their full force, however, the mass actions began only after a series of events revealing the beginning of a *rapprochement* between the republicans and the reactionaries. Almost all the rightists voted for Barrios as Speaker of the Cortes. In March, Azaña prolonged the press censorship and the state of alarm decreed by the previous reactionary cabinet. On April 4, only eight days before the first municipal elections since 1931 were to be held, Azaña decreed an indefinite postponement, upon the demand of the reactionaries. The day before, Azaña made a speech promising the reactionaries that he would go no further than the limits fixed by the People's Front program, and that he would stop the strikes and seizures of the land. The speech was greeted with delirious joy by the reactionary press. Calvo Sotelo, the monarchist, declared: "It was the expression of a true conservative. His declaration of respect for the law and the Constitution should make a good impression on public opinion." The spokesman of Gil Robles' organization declared: "I support ninety per cent of the speech." On April 15, with many economic strikes going on, the rightists demanded an end to "the state of anarchy." "The troublemakers and fomenters will be exterminated," promised Minister Salvador on behalf of the cabinet. The same day, Azaña delivered a sharp attack on the proletariat: "The government will revise the whole system of defense, in order to put an end to the reign of violence," declared Azaña. "Communism would signify the death of Spain!" The spokesman for the Catalan landowners, Ventosa, hailed him: "Azaña is the only man capable of offering the country security and defense of all legal rights." The same day, emboldened, fascists and Civil Guard officers shot up a workers' street in Madrid.

Such was the governmental atmosphere when, on April 17, the C.N.T. declared a general strike in Madrid in protest against the fascist attack. The U.G.T. had not been asked to join the strike, and at first denounced it, as did the Stalinists. But the workers came out of all the shops and factories and public services, not because they had changed their allegiance, but because they wanted to fight, and only the anarchists were calling them to struggle. As the whole commercial life of Madrid began to be paralyzed, the Stalinists still declared "they may participate later. Their present decision was to support the Azaña government insofar as it takes effective action against the reactionaries." (*Daily Worker*, April 18.) That evening, when in spite of them the strike had proved a

huge success, the U.G.T. and the Stalinists belatedly endorsed it before it was called off.

The bourgeoisie realized that the general strike of April 17, and the wave of economic strikes which it inspired, would develop into a proletarian offensive against capitalism and its agency, the government. How to stop this offensive? The army proposed to crush it forcibly. But even among the reactionaries there was serious doubt whether this was possible as yet. Azaña had a much better solution: let the workers' leaders stop the strikes. So, inducted in May as the new president of Spain to the tune of the "International" sung with clenched fists by Stalinist and socialist deputies who had elected him (the reactionaries did not put up an opposing candidate), Azaña asked Prieto to form a coalition cabinet.

Prieto was more than willing to become Premier. But the mere rumor produced such a storm of opposition in the Socialist Party, that he dared not accept. Caballero warned Prieto that he must not enter without the consent of the party; and behind Caballero, and decidedly to the left of him, was most of the party and the U.G.T.

Madrid, strongest of the party organizations, had adopted a new program in April. and was presenting it for adoption by the national convention in June. The program declared the bourgeoisie could not carry out the democratic tasks of the revolution, above all was incapable of settling the agrarian question and that therefore the proletarian revolution was on the order of the day. It was weakened by many grave errors, notably the continued failure to understand the rôle of soviets. But it signified a profound break with reformism.

Logically, that program, accepted by Caballero, should have been accompanied by a decisive break with the Popular Front policy. Logic, however, scarcely guides centrists. Declaring that the government "has not yet entirely exhausted its possibilities," and that trade union unity and merger of the Marxist parties must precede the revolution, Caballero continued to direct the left socialist deputies in alternately abusing the government but supporting it on every crucial question. Nevertheless, in spite of his frequent love feasts of oratory with the Stalinists, the left socialist organ under his control, *Claridad*, continued to be a daily contrast to the organs of the Communist Party and the right wing socialists. *Claridad* effectively exposed the fraudulent character of the agrarian program; showed how Prieto's pet projects of irrigation works were enriching the big landowners while the

peasants remained poor, and even carried articles calling upon the peasantry to seize the big estates. Simultaneously, the Stalinists and right wing socialists praised regularly the Quiroga government's agrarian reform! Though Caballero finally had agreed to support Azaña for the presidency, *Claridad* had to carry Javier Bueno's articles denouncing Azaña as the candidate of the rightists. The revolutionary elements among the left socialists were so strong that they had their say despite Caballero.

On the issue of Prieto's entry into the government, Caballero dared not break with his revolutionary following. Equally, however, Prieto dared not submit the question for decision to the national convention. There then took place an extraordinary campaign of pressure to induce the party to let Prieto become Premier. Almost everybody outside the Socialist Party wanted Prieto in the government. The republican press asked for an end of the party conflict—and its solution by Prieto's entry. Barrios' "Republican Union" Party, by this time representing much of the industrial bourgeoisie since Lerroux' Radicals had disappeared, declared it wanted a socialist premier, and that he be Prieto. Miguel Maura, representing the extreme right industrialists and landowners, called for an authoritarian régime, with the Cortes suspended, and carried out by "all republicans and those socialists not contaminated by revolutionary lunacy." The Catalan government and its supporters, including the Stalinists, called for entry of the socialists.

The Stalinists sought to make support of this reactionary demand sound very radical. "If the government continues on this road (the false road of 1931), we will work, not breaking the Popular Front, but strengthening it and pushing it toward the solution of a government of a popular revolutionary type, which will do those things which this government has not understood or has not wished to understand." (*Mundo Obrero*, July 6.) But all that was required to make this government completely identical with that of 1931 was to include in it proletarian hostages!

Even the P.O.U.M., "Workers Party of Marxist Unity," joined the chorus. Formed by a fusion of the so-called Trotskyists with the "Workers and Peasants Bloc," a semi-nationalist Catalan group, it had signed the Popular Front pact, had declared its "independence" of the pact and attacked the concept of the People's Front, only again to support a People's Front for the municipal elections, and again to declare its independence when Azaña decreed the postponement. In order to justify its refusal to enter the Socialist Party, as Trotsky proposed, and thereby throw its

forces—numbering only a few thousand even according to its own estimates—on the side of the left wing, it refused to see the profound significance of the development of the left wing. In fact, in *La Batalla* of May 22nd, it denied that there was any real difference between the left and right wings. This false estimate led to deplorable tactics: at a time when the left socialists were engaged in a struggle with the right wing on this question, the P.O.U.M. called for “an authentic Government of the Popular Front, with the direct (ministerial) participation of the Socialist and Communist Parties” as a means to “complete the democratic experience of the masses” and hasten the revolution.

This well-nigh universal pressure failed to weaken the determination of the left socialists. Whereupon Prieto tried desperate measures. Under his control, the National Executive Committee postponed the convention from June to October; outlawed *Claridad* and cut it off from party funds; instructed the district committees to “reorganize” dissident sections, and ran a farcical election to fill vacancies on the executive, not counting the left wing votes. The left wing repudiated these actions, and declared the Prieto leadership had forfeited the confidence of the party.

In spite of all Prieto's moves it was clear that the left wing had the masses. Caballero had been re-elected Secretary of the U.G.T. by overwhelming numbers. And behind Caballero stood much more determined elements. Javier Bueno, a leader of the Asturian rebellion, was speaking at great meetings and demanding not only an end to Prieto's politics, but also to Caballero's. Significant sections of the party had refused to support the Popular Front ticket in the presidential election, and had put up straight socialist tickets. While Caballero's national policy for the U.G.T. was little better than that of the Stalinists, other leaders, on a local or industrial scale, were joining with the C.N.T. in powerful and successful strikes. Permanent committees joined the two unions in the ports, on the ships and on the railroads; port and ship workers thereby won nationwide strikes, and the railroad workers had just voted for a national strike when the revolt broke out. The backward peasant elements in the party were learned enough to know what they wanted. Two days after Vidarte, secretary to the Prieto leadership, had indignantly denied to the United Press the rumor that the socialist peasantry of Badajoz were seizing the land, 25,000 peasant families, socialist-led, took over the big estates. The same thing took place elsewhere; Prieto's attempt to conceal the revolutionary significance of the seizure, by getting the Institute for Agrarian Reform to send in its engineers and legalize



the seizure, only encouraged left socialists to repeat the process. The grim miners of Asturias, once the stronghold of the Prieto group, now engaged in political strikes against the government; 30,000 of them struck on June 13, demanding dismissal of the Ministers of Labor and Agriculture (the latter, Funes, a darling of the Stalinists!), and on June 19 fulfilled their threat of having all 90,000 miners cease work. The government managed to get them back to work on June 23, but on July 6 they, and the workers of Oviedo, threatened a general strike against the dismissal by the government of Governor Bosque of Asturias (Calvo Sotelo, chief of the reaction, had received an insulting telegram from the pro-labor governor, and successfully insisted upon his dismissal). The miners repeated their demand, on July 15, and would have gone on strike had not the revolt broken out. In the face of all these unambiguous indications of the revolutionary temper of the socialist proletariat, Prieto dared not risk entry into the cabinet.

Meanwhile, the strike wave reached the proportions of a revolutionary crisis. We can only roughly indicate its magnitude. Every city of any importance had at least one general strike during those five months. Nearly a million were on strike on June 10; a half million on June 20; a million on June 24; over a million during the first days of July. The strikes covered both the cities and the agricultural workers; the latter shattered the traditional village boundaries of struggle, waging, for example, a five weeks' strike covering Malaga province and 125,000 peasant families.

*El Socialista* denounced the tidal wave: "The system is genuinely anarchistic and provokes the irritation of the rightists." *Mundo Obrero* pleaded with the workers that the struggles were bringing them into collision with the Popular Front government. That government, and its provincial governors, threw the Civil Guard against the strikers in desperate attempts to halt the offensive. Particularly desperate measures were taken against the C.N.T. Companies filled the Barcelona jails with anarchists. In Madrid, their headquarters were closed and 180 of them arrested in a raid on May 31; on June 4, Minister Augusto Barcia announced that "if the syndicalists persist in disobeying the orders of the Ministry of Labor, the government proposes to declare syndicalism outside the law." On June 19, the government again closed the C.N.T. headquarters. But this was not 1931, when Caballero himself led the attack on the C.N.T.! The U.G.T. now solidarized itself with its anarcho-syndicalist comrades, and the government had to retreat.

Strikes for political demands against the government also devel-

oped. On June 8, a general strike was called in Lerida to force the government to fulfill its promise to feed the unemployed. The Murcia miners went out on June 24 protesting against the government's failure to fulfill electoral promises of bettering conditions. On July 2, the Federation of Agricultural Workers of Andalusia demanded government funds to make up for loss of crops. We have already mentioned the Asturian political strikes. On July 8, students in Barcelona Catholic schools struck, demanding the priests be turned out and lay teachers provided. On July 14, workers demonstrated in Madrid, carrying enlarged photographs of a formal ball held at the Brazilian Embassy, titled, "The republican ministers amuse themselves while the workers die." These are merely examples of political issues raised by the masses. We may be sure that they were not led by supporters of the People's Front!

Neither *El Socialista's* intimations that *Claridad* obtained money from a bank of Catholic reactionaries, nor the filthy slanders of *Mundo Obrero* that the C.N.T. was in league with fascist groups, nor the government's repressive measures, could halt the revolutionary development of the left socialists, the growing unity between C.N.T. and U.G.T. and the tidal wave of strikes.

Nor did the scope for fascist organization and arming provided by the People's Front policy go unresisted by the militant proletariat. They left to *El Socialista* and *Mundo Obrero* pleading with the government to stop the fascists. The revolutionary workers confronted the fascists on the street. From February to the July revolt, these street fights accounted for two deaths and six wounded *per day*. This was, in truth, civil war; and the fascists suffered the greatest casualties. The deadly blows to the morale of the fascist groups also steeled thousands of militants for leadership on July 18.

Finally, the wage and hour improvements won by the strikes, not being followed by an increase in production, of which Spanish industry is deprived by the world crisis, led to price increases; early in July the Madrid press estimated a 20% rise in one month. The workers felt they had been cheated, and prepared for more decisive strikes for more decisive demands. (The identical process is now—mid-September—taking place in France!)

The reaction—which is to say, Spanish capitalism—had pinned its hopes on Azaña for a time; when he proved impotent to stop the workers, its hopes had shifted to Prieto; but the left socialists prevented that solution. There could be no hope, therefore, of

a repetition of 1931-1933, and a peaceful return of reaction. The right wing socialists and Stalinists were powerless to prevent the revolutionary development of the Spanish proletariat. Having armed and prepared for the worst, the reactionaries dared not wait until the revolutionary tide overwhelmed them. With ninety-nine per cent of the officer corps, the Foreign Legion and Moorish troops, and most of the fifty provincial garrisons in their hands, Spanish capitalism revolted against impending doom.

## VII.

### COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND DUAL POWER

#### I. THE TREACHERY OF THE PEOPLE'S FRONT GOVERNMENT

Azaña and the People's Front government answered the counter-revolution by attempting to come to terms with it.

Hopelessly compromised by their People's Front policy, the Stalinists have attempted to explain away this treachery by inventing a distinction between "weak" republicans like Barrios and "strong" ones like Azaña. The truth is that Azaña *led* the attempt to compromise with the fascist generals and that all the republican groups were implicated in his move.

Here, collected from *El Socialista* and *Claridad*, are the indisputable facts:

On the morning of July 17, General Franco, having seized Morocco, radioed his manifesto to the garrisons. It was received at the naval station near Madrid by a loyal operator and promptly revealed to the Minister of the Navy. But the government did not divulge the news until 9 o'clock of the 18th; and then it issued only a reassuring note that Spain was completely under government control. Two other notes were issued by the government later in the day, the last at 3:15 P.M., when the government had full and positive information of the scope of the rising, including the seizure of Seville. Yet that final note said:

"The Government speaks again in order to confirm the absolute tranquility of the whole Peninsula.

"The Government acknowledges the offers of support which it has received [from the workers' organizations] and, while being grateful for them, declares that the best aid that can be given to the Government is to guarantee the normality of daily life, in order to set a high example of serenity and of confidence in the means of the military strength of the State.

"Thanks to the foresighted means adopted by the authorities, a broad movement of aggression against the republic may be deemed to have been broken up; it has found no assistance in the Peninsula and has only succeeded in securing followers in a fraction of the army in Morocco. . . .

"These measures, together with the customary orders to the forces in Morocco who are laboring to overcome the rising,

permit us to affirm that the action of the Government will be sufficient to reestablish normality." (*Claridad*, July 18.)

Having thus refused to arm the workers, and justified its treacherous refusal by this incredibly dishonest note, the cabinet of Azaña went into an all-night conference. There, Azaña had Quiroga's cabinet of Azaña's Left Republicans resign; and appointed as Premier the former lieutenant of Lerroux, Martinez Barrios, head of the Republican Union Party. Barrios and Azaña picked a "respectable" cabinet of Barrios men and Right Wing Republicans outside the People's Front. This cabinet, too, was committed to refusing to arm the workers.

*Rather than arm the workers—their allies in the People's Front, who had put them into power!—Azaña and the republicans were preparing to make peace with the fascists, at the expense of the workers. Had Azaña carried out his plan, the fascists would have conquered Spain.*

But in the very hours that the ministers huddled together in the presidential palace, the proletariat was already mobilizing. In Madrid itself the Socialist Youth militia was distributing its scant store of arms; was throwing up barricades on key streets and around the Montaña barracks; was organizing its patrols for house to house seizures of reactionaries; at midnight had launched the first attack on the barracks. In Barcelona, remembering the treachery in October 1934 of this same President of Catalonia, Companys, the C.N.T. and P.O.U.M. ("Workers Party") militants had stormed several government arms depots on the afternoon of the 18th. By the time the garrison revolted, at one the next morning, the armed workers had surrounded the troops in an iron ring, arming eager recruits with equipment seized from the fascists, and with whatever could be confiscated from the department stores; later the militia seized the regular arsenals. The Asturian miners had outfitted a column of six thousand for a march on Madrid, before the ministerial crisis was well over. In Malaga, strategic port opposite Morocco, the ingenious workers, unarmed, had surrounded the reactionary garrison with a wall of gasoline-fired houses and barricades. In Valencia, refused arms by the Madrid governor, the workers prepared to face the troops with barricades, cobble-stones and kitchen-knives—until their comrades within the garrison shot the officers and gave arms to the workers. In a word: without so much as a by your leave to the government, the proletariat had begun a war to the death against the fascists. Companys and Azaña found themselves confronted by the first regiments of the Red Army of the Spanish proletariat.

The Azaña-Barrios scheme for a deal with the fascist generals collapsed because the workers had prevented it. And for no other reason! Thanks only to their utter distrust of the government, the masses were able to prevent their betrayal. Independent mobilization, under their *own* leadership, with their *own* banners—only this prevented the victory of fascism.

Thus it was that, side by side with the formal power still held by the government, there arose the “unofficial” but far more substantial power of the armed proletariat—the “dual power,” Lenin called it. One power, that of Azaña and Companys, was already too weak to challenge the existence of the other; the other, that of the armed proletariat, was not yet strong enough, not yet conscious enough of the necessity, to dispense with the existence of the other. The phenomenon of “dual power” has accompanied all proletarian revolutions; it signifies that the class struggle is about to reach the point where either one or the other must become undisputed master; it is a critical balancing of alternatives on a razor edge; a long period of equilibrium is out of the question, either one or the other must soon prevail!

The crushing of the counter-revolution will make infinitely more likely the establishment of a workers’ and peasants’ government. The interests of the bourgeoisie are not, therefore, served by a victory over the fascist generals: the true interests of Spanish capitalism lie in a victory of the counter-revolution or, what is the same thing, a compromise with it. That is why the People’s Front government behaved so treacherously in the first days of the counter-revolution. That is why the People’s Front government continued to behave treacherously thereafter. Surrounded by armed workers, the republicans dared not openly go over to the enemy; but their policy, at the front and in the rear, permitted the counter-revolution success after success. This was the plain meaning of the change of government after the fall of Irun. It was clear enough in the statement to the press by a spokesman for the Caballero cabinet, who

“dwelt at length on the improvement of the morale of the militia by Largo Caballero’s assumption of the premiership last week.

“‘They know now that they are being directed intelligently. . . They know that if they die, it will not be the fault of the haphazard and weak-kneed command which characterized the last administration.

“‘We shall now take the offensive and attack the Rebels where they are weak, where we want to attack them instead

of, as before, attacking where they are strong and able to repel us.'” (*N. Y. Times*, Sept. 7.)

If so damning an indictment of the Azaña-Giral government is made by those who will yet have to explain to the proletariat why they permitted such a government to direct the struggle for the first seven weeks, the whole truth must be much, much worse.

The ostensible justification for the People's Front was that it secured the aid of the republicans against counter-revolutionary fascism. The People's Front, however, served the opposite function: it prevented the proletariat from tearing away from the republican politicians the petty-bourgeoisie who, in all victorious revolutions, throw in their lot with the proletariat when they see it determinedly striking out for a new and rich life under a new social order. The People's Front subordinated both the petty-bourgeoisie and the proletarian masses to the treacherous leadership of the bourgeois politicians. Only the dual power of the proletariat has so far prevented the victory of reaction.

## 2. THE DUAL POWER IN CATALONIA

Precisely in Catalonia, where the People's Front was weakest, the dual power has developed most decisively, and made the four Catalonian provinces the most impregnable fortress of the civil war.

The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. (Iberian Anarchist Federation), leading most of the Catalonian proletariat and much of the peasantry, was never part of the People's Front. The P.O.U.M., after much vacillation, finally broke with the People's Front, made a sharp turn to the left, and with extraordinary rapidity grew into a mass party in Catalonia in the two months of civil war. Thus, the only proletarian adherents to the People's Front in Catalonia are the U.G.T., incomparably weaker here than the C.N.T., and the Stalinist organization, the so-called “United Socialist Party.” Far from weakening its capacities for struggle, as the People's Front apologists had been declaring, it was this relative freedom from bourgeois ties that enabled the Catalonian masses to conquer the counter-revolution at home and to come to the aid of the rest of Spain. Herein lies a profound lesson for those who still believe in the People's Front!

The Catalonian proletariat understands that civil war must be fought by *revolutionary methods*, and not under the slogans of bourgeois democracy. It understands that civil war cannot be fought by military methods alone, but that the *political methods*,

arousing the great masses to action, can even take the army away from its reactionary officers. It directs the struggle, at the front and in the rear, not through agencies of the government but through organs controlled by the proletarian organizations.

The "Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias of Catalonia" directs the struggle. The anarchists have three representatives for the C.N.T. and two for the F.A.I. The U.G.T. was given three, though it is small, to encourage similar organization elsewhere. The P.O.U.M. has one, the peasant organization one, and the Stalinists one. The left bourgeois parties have four, making a total of fifteen. In actuality, the Central Committee is dominated by the C.N.T., the F.A.I. and the P.O.U.M.

For these have a program so fundamentally different from that of Madrid, that the U.G.T. and the Stalinists are dragged along only because they fear to be cast aside, and the left bourgeoisie because they are at the mercy of the armed proletariat. That program is identical with that raised by the Bolsheviks in August 1917 in the struggle against Kornilov's counter-revolution:

*Workers' control of production, arousing the highest pitch of initiative and enthusiasm of the proletariat. Mobilization of the armed masses, independent of government control. Vigilance against betrayal by the government and no renunciation, not for a moment, of the sharpest criticism of it. And the drawing into the struggle of the peasantry by the only slogan which can vitalize the starving and backward countryside: LAND TO THOSE WHO TILL IT!*

As soon as the counter-revolution began, the C.N.T. took over all transportation, public utilities and big industrial plants. Democratic control is ensured by election of factory committees based on proportional representation. Such committees have also been set up to control production in those shops and factories still privately owned.

Direction of economic life is now in the hands of the "Council of Economy," which, while still linked to the old order, finds itself compelled at least to talk about socialistic measures. It has five members from the anarcho-syndicalists, one from the P.O.U.M., one from the U.G.T. and one from the Catalonian government. On August 19, it issued its program, which includes: collectivization of landed estates, to be run by landworkers' unions; collectivization of public utilities, transportation and big industry; collectivization of establishments abandoned by their owners; workers' control of banks until they are nationalized; workers' control of all establishments continuing under private



ownership; absorption of unemployed in collectivized agriculture and industry; electrification of Catalonia; monopoly of foreign trade to protect the new economic order.

In the midst of civil war the factory committees are demonstrating the superiority of proletarian methods of production. The C.N.T.-U.G.T. committee running the railways and subways reports that by eliminating high salaries of directors, sinecures and waste, tens of thousands of pesetas have been saved, wages of most workers raised to create equalization of pay, extension of the lines is planned, fares will be reduced, trains run on time, and the six-hour day will soon be introduced!

The metal plants have been transformed into munitions works, the automobile factories are producing armored cars and airplanes. The latest dispatches show that the Madrid government depends greatly on Catalonia for these all-important war supplies. A considerable part of the forces protecting the Madrid front were despatched there by the Catalanian militia.

Few realize the significance of the successful campaign being fought by the Catalanian militia on the Zaragoza-Huesca front. In the plans of the fascist generals Zaragoza, seat of the War College and one of the biggest army garrisons, was to have been for eastern Spain what Burgos has been in the west. But the rapidity with which the Catalanian proletariat crushed the Catalanian garrisons and marched westward into Aragon defeated the fascist plans.

The Catalanian militia marched into Aragon as an army of social liberation. They have been able to paralyze the mobility of the reactionary army by rousing the peasantry as the Madrid forces have been unable to. Arriving in a village, the militia committees sponsor the election of a village anti-fascist committee, to which are turned over all the large estates, and the crops, supplies, cattle, tools, tractors, etc. belonging to big landowners and reactionaries. The village committee organizes production on the new basis and creates a village militia to carry out socialization and fight reaction. Captured reactionaries are placed before the general assembly of the village for trial. All property titles, mortgages and debt documents in the official records go into a bonfire. Having thus transformed the world of the village, the Catalanian columns can go forward, secure in the knowledge that every village so dealt with is a fortress of the revolution!

The Catalanian government continues to exist, passes decrees approving the steps taken by the proletariat, pretends that it is leading the struggle. The Madrid government abets this pretense,

by consulting with Companys, but then it must go on to transact all business with the militia and factory committees. At the end of July Companys made a "clever" attempt to recoup power, by reorganizing the Catalonian cabinet, three members of the Stalinist "United Socialist Party" entering it. But this maneuver fell through in a few days. The anarcho-syndicalists served notice on the Stalinists that they considered their entry into the cabinet as disruption of the proletarian bloc, and the Stalinists were compelled to resign from the cabinet. Such little influence as the government still has, by virtue of its representation in the Council of Economy and the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias, will undoubtedly tend to disappear as these organs, in accordance with the proposal of the P.O.U.M., are broadened into elective bodies of delegates from the militia and factories.

The revolutionary course of the Catalonian proletariat and its consequent successes in production and at the front constitute the most damning indictment of the Popular Front policy which is still being pursued in Madrid. Only on the road taken by the Catalonian proletariat can the Spanish masses defeat the counter-revolution!

### 3. THE MADRID REGIME

While the Catalonian workers were ensuring for themselves the power which had fallen from the hands of the government, the right wing socialists and the Stalinists were busily putting the power back into the hands of the Madrid government. As a result, the relation of the government and the proletarian organizations is almost the opposite to that prevailing in Catalonia.

We have already seen how treacherous was the policy of the Azaña-Giral government. Yet it was to this government that the right wing socialists and Stalinists ceded all power!

There is not the slightest difference between the outlook of the bourgeoisie and these "leaders" of workers. The workers' militia must limit its struggle to the defense of the republic, that is, to the maintenance of capitalism, to support the bourgeois government loyally, not to dream of socialism. The Stalinists issued a manifesto on August 18, wildly praised by the bourgeois press for good and sufficient reason: it does not include a *single* social demand! Not a word about seizure of the land, freedom for Morocco, workers' control of production—nothing but abject loyalty to the bourgeoisie! Nor is this all. The Stalinists want no workers' state even after the crushing of the counter-revolution: "It is absolutely false that the present workers' movement has for

umph and to extract from the war the maximum social conquests, as well as to destroy the enemy's economic power. . . . On this point and on the organization of the parties and unions around the government to make the war and the revolution simultaneously, Catalonia is a beacon for Castile and the rest of Spain."

On no question has the anti-proletarian character of the Stalinist program been revealed so much as when the Azaña-Giral government attempted to create a new army. The bourgeoisie recognized that, despite the subordination of the workers' militia to the military commands of the general staff, the internal structure of the militia, organized in separate columns adhering to the various proletarian parties and unions and led by elected workers, rendered hopeless any attempt to secure actual bourgeois control over them. Whereupon the government called for enlistment of ten thousand reserve soldiers as a separate force under direct government control. The Stalinist manifesto of August 18 supported this counter-revolutionary proposal, in accordance with the conception of the militia which *Mundo Obrero* had declared on August 11:

"No. Nothing of militias ruled by parties and organizations. But neither of militias of parties or of unions. They are militias that have their fundamental base in the People's Front, faithful to the politics of the People's Front."

"Some comrades have wished to see in the creation of the new voluntary army something like a menace to the rôle of the militias," said *Mundo Obrero*, August 21. The Stalinists denied such a possibility: "What is involved is to complement and reenforce the militia to give it greater efficacy and speedily end the war." And it ended its defense of the governmental proposal: "Our slogan, today as yesterday, is the same for this. Everything for the People's Front and everything through the People's Front."

This thoroughly reactionary position was exposed by *Claridad*. The left socialist organ examined the reasons offered for the creation of the new army. It showed that the claim that it would provide additional forces is false, since "the number of men now incorporated in the militias or who desire to join it can be considered virtually unlimited." The claim that the reserve soldiers would provide the military experience lacking by the militias is negated by the fact that those reserves "that have not wished to join the armed forces until now would not be animated by the same political and combative ardor that induced the militiamen to

its object the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship after the revolution has terminated," declares the Stalinist chief, Hernandez, on August 10. "It cannot be said we have a social motive for our participation in the war. We Communists are the first to repudiate this supposition. We are motivated exclusively by a desire to defend the democratic republic." Any property seized is purely as a temporary defense measure, declare the Spanish Stalinists. (*Daily Worker*, September 18). To realize how alien to Leninism is such craven nonsense, one has only to recall Lenin's injunctions, in the midst of the Kornilov struggle, against any political support to the government, and his program of fighting the counter-revolution by seizing the land and establishing workers' control of production. Having recruited most of its following under People's Front slogans since February, the Stalinist party can use them for the most shameless devotion to a bourgeois régime of which any proletarian party has ever been guilty.

The left socialists distinguished themselves from the Stalinist position, by an editorial entitled, "Dialectic of War and Revolution":

"Some people are saying: 'Let us smash fascism first, let us finish the war victoriously, and then there will be time to speak of revolution and to make it if necessary.' Those who are saying this have not contemplated maturely upon the formidable dialectical process which is carrying us all along. The war and the revolution are one and the same thing. They not only do not exclude or hinder each other, but supplement and support each other. The war needs the revolution for its triumph, in the same way that the revolution has required the war. . . . It is the revolution in the rear that will make more assured and more inspired the victory on the fields of battle."  
(*Claridad*, August 22.)

This correct conception, impressed upon the left socialists by the example of the Catalonian proletariat is then, however, given a typical centrist distortion by the editors of *Claridad*, by the simple process of crediting to the Catalonian government the achievements actually carried through by the workers. The editorial ends:

"The clear historic vision exemplified by the Catalonian Generalidad deserves only praise. It has decreed governmental measures that reflect the inextricable relation between the war and the revolution. To expropriate rebellious capital and to collectivize it is the best way of collaborating for tri-

enlist." Having disposed of the excuses for the new army, the left socialists bluntly concluded:

"To think of another type of army to be substituted for those who are actually fighting and who in certain ways control their own revolutionary action, is to think in counter-revolutionary terms. That is what Lenin said (*State and Revolution*): 'Every revolution, after the destruction of the state apparatus, shows us how the governing class tries to re-establish special bodies of armed men at "its" service, and how the oppressed class attempts to create a new organization of a type capable of serving not the exploiters but the exploited.'

"We are sure that this counter-revolutionary thought, which would be as impotent as it is inept, has not passed through the government's mind; but the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, who are saving the republic with their lives, must not forget these accurate words of Lenin, and must take care that the masses and the leadership of the armed forces, which should be above all the people in arms, should not escape from our hands." (*Claridad*, August 20.)

Not those who usurp the prestige of the Russian revolution only to betray its principles in service to the bourgeoisie, not the Stalinists, but the vanguard of the left socialists teach the Spanish proletariat the Leninist conception of the class nature of the army!

The different conceptions of the nature of the present struggle also come into conflict on other questions. The anarcho-syndicalists, the P.O.U.M. and the Socialist Youth, recognizing to varying degrees the treacherous rôle of the bourgeoisie, demand the cleansing from all institutions of all doubtful elements, and insist on retaining arms in the rear to guard against bourgeois betrayal. The Stalinists, on the other hand, have the same "broad" definition of "anti-fascists" as the republicans, and raise the slogan, "Not One Rifle Idling in the Rear!" So broad, indeed, is their conception of anti-fascists that *Claridad* protested, August 19 and 20, that the Stalinist-controlled "Alliance of Anti-Fascist Writers" was harboring counter-revolutionaries. The contemptible campaign of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists for disarming the rear was well answered by the C.N.T. leader, Garcia Oliver in *Solidaridad Obrera*, deftly turning the point against them: "We desire that our comrades, taking account of the situation, make an inventory of the war material they control and proceed to make a study of *what is indispensable to them to assure the necessary safe-*

*guarding of the revolutionary order in the rear, sending on what they do not need."*

We may summarize the character of the régime of Azaña-Giral by stating one deadly fact: *it continued to censor the press of the workers' organizations whose members were dying at the front.* Even the abject *Mundo Obrero* learned what a Popular Front government is: its issue of August 20, having published a photograph deemed objectionable, was confiscated! *Claridad*, daily bearing the stigmata of the censor, reports this fact. The Stalinists of course, suppressed outside of Spain the existence of this intolerable and shameful condition.

#### 4. THE CABALLERO CABINET

We have no doubt at all that Caballero's entry into the government was greeted with the utmost joy by large sections of the proletariat. He had stood far to the left of the Stalinists and Prieto, and the militia especially must have felt that Caballero was delivering them out of the hands of the treacherous republicans.

We have no means of knowing at this moment how much of this joy was quickly dissipated a few days ago when, after driving out the anarcho-syndicalists, the republican "defenders" of San Sebastian turned it over intact to the enemy; and when these same republicans, upon retreating to the stronghold of Bilbao, put the 40,000 militiamen to such use—that most of the opposing army of General Mola has been sent to the Madrid and Zaragoza front. The northern front has been betrayed, and that has happened since Caballero took over the government.

What is Caballero's program? No word has come from him. Is his program a "minimum," that is a bourgeois one, satisfactory to the five bourgeois members of his cabinet? Is it the program of Prieto and the Stalinists, which is the bourgeois program? What is the basic difference between the cabinet of Caballero and that of his predecessor? That Caballero is more sincere? But, as Lenin said once for all, no one has yet invented a sincerometer. What is basic is the program. If Caballero's program does not differ from his predecessor's, his conduct of the struggle will be no different.

The Spanish proletariat will have to take the road on which the Catalonian proletariat has begun to march. There is no other road to victory!

Who are the rank and file soldiers of Franco's armies, and why are there so few desertions from his ranks? They are mainly sons

of peasants, serving their two-year period in the army. They can be won over, induced to desert, to shoot their officers, by winning their families to the side of the workers. How? By aiding them to seize the land. That slogan should have been raised after the February 16 victory; the failure to do so is the explanation of the fact that the southern provinces, including a stronghold of the Stalinists, Seville, can be in the hands of the fascists. "What did the Republic give you to eat?" The result is much passivity among the peasants. Within the territories held by them, the workers must aid the peasants in seizing and distributing the large estates. By ten thousand channels that fact, transforming the peasants' world, will be carried into the provinces held by the fascists . . . and anti-fascist peasants will spring out of the ground, and Franco's armies will melt away.

Thousands of workers have paid with their lives because their organizations did not fight to give land to the peasants. Thousands more are dying because their organizations did not raise the slogan of freedom for the Spanish colonies. Yet, even now, that slogan and a bold campaign of propaganda in Morocco would disintegrate far more easily than by bullets the Moorish legions of Franco.

Catalonia has shown what prodigious tasks of production the proletariat will undertake once it is in control of the factories. Yet the workers' committees in Madrid which at first took over the public utilities and many big plants were thereafter subordinated to the government's bureaucratic administration. This constriction is not bettered because the government now includes a socialist delegation. Until the workers are masters in the factories, those factories will not become fortresses of the revolution.

Above all, it is intolerable that the workers shall do the drudgery and the dying, without a voice in the direction of the struggle. Caballero has announced the re-opening of the Cortes on October 1. That is a cruel joke! That Cortes no more reflects the sentiment of the people than the nineteenth resembles the twentieth century! Ages have gone by, measured politically, since the republican bourgeoisie was guaranteed a majority on February 16 by workers' votes. The only authentic voice of the people today would be a National Congress of the elected delegates of the militia who are fighting, the workers who are producing and transporting, and the peasants who are providing the food. Only such a soviet, issuing from factory, militia and village committees, is competent to speak for Spain today.

Every one of these basic needs of the revolution can be carried out only against the will of the republican bourgeoisie. That means

going far beyond the People's Front. But such "disruption" will mean a "loss" only to the treacherous republican politicians and the substantial capitalists; the main sections of the petty-bourgeoisie will cast their lot with the new social order, as they did in the Russian Revolution.

Caballero's partners in the cabinet, the Stalinists, have made clear their deadly opposition to the revolutionary program: "The slogan today is all power and authority to the People's Front Government." (*Daily Worker*, Sept. 11.) That slogan means just what it says! Lenin's slogan, "All power to the soviets," meant *no* power to the coalition government. The Stalinist slogan means *no* power to the embryo soviets, the factory, militia and village committees. As Stalinism sacrificed the German revolution to the maintenance of the European *status quo*, so it is now seeking to sacrifice the Spanish revolution to the maintenance of the Franco-Soviet Alliance. Stalinism will not raise the slogan of freedom for Morocco because that would embarrass French colonial policy. Stalinism will not go over the People's Front to the Spanish revolution because that would bring the revolution immediately on the order of the day in France and Stalinism, pervaded like all bureaucracy with a cynical lack of faith in the masses, prefers a strong bourgeois French ally to the possibility of a soviet France. The essence of Stalinist policy is: "Socialism in one country—and in no other country." The Stalinists have become open, shameless enemies of the proletarian revolution. Fortunately for the world proletariat, Stalinism in Spain does not command the forces it held in leash in Germany—and precisely because the lessons of Germany have entered the consciousness of the Spanish proletariat.

Great forces are available for the proletarian victory. In the crucible of civil war they will be welded into a single revolutionary party. The contradiction between the traditional anti-political theory of anarcho-syndicalism and its present political-revolutionary practice will inevitably burst asunder its trade union form of organization. Already, thousands upon thousands of C.N.T. adherents have joined the P.O.U.M. That organization, counting in its cadres the most experienced revolutionary elements in the country, has swerved considerably away from its centrist course,\* but its main forces are limited to Catalonia and Valencia. We may

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\* How sharply, indeed, one may measure by contrasting its policy with that of its "international organization", the International Committee of Revolutionary Socialist Unity (S.A.P. of Germany, I.L.P. of England) whose manifesto to the Spanish proletariat does not contain a single word of criticism of the Popular Front! And this, first, "cautious" word from this claimant to the title of revolutionary center is dated August 17!



be sure that the most important cadres in the rest of Spain, the revolutionaries among the left socialists, who have long been chafing at Caballero's vacillation, will enter the revolutionary stream. Even the inexperienced cadres of the Stalinist organization will provide their best elements for the new revolutionary party. The revolution, as always, will have a broader leadership than that of any party; but the gigantic tasks it will pose will be the final goal to the unification of the revolutionary currents of all the parties.

## 5. SPAIN AND EUROPE

*Claridad* has been publishing a box, "Prophetic Texts," of a few lines, different each day, from Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. The choice of Trotsky is not accidental. It reflects a major preoccupation of Spanish revolutionists: the problem of the European revolution. Technologically backward and fearing military intervention by Hitler and Mussolini, the Spanish revolutionists have been keenly aware of the inextricable relation between their revolution and that of Europe, especially France. For this reason they turn to Trotsky, the authoritative spokesman of revolutionary internationalism.

On July 30, only a few days after the struggle began, Trotsky dealt with this problem, and with the meaning of the Spanish events for France. His closing words are keener than any I could choose to close:

"Certainly, the Spanish proletariat, like the French proletariat, does not want to remain disarmed before Mussolini and Hitler. But to defend themselves against these enemies it is first necessary to crush the enemy in one's own country. It is impossible to overthrow the bourgeoisie without crushing the officers' corps. It is impossible to crush the officers' corp without overthrowing the bourgeoisie. In every victorious counter-revolution, the officers have played the decisive rôle. Every victorious revolution that had a profound social character destroyed the old officers' corps. This was the case in the Great French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, and this was the case in the October Revolution in 1917. To decide on such a measure one must stop crawling on one's knees before the Radical bourgeoisie. A genuine alliance of workers and peasants must be created against the bourgeoisie, including the Radicals. One must have confidence in the strength, initiative and courage of the proletariat and the proletariat will know how to bring the soldier over to its side. This will be a genuine and not a fake alliance of workers, peasants and soldiers.

This very alliance is being created and tempered right now in the fire of civil war in Spain. The victory of the people means the end of the People's Front and the beginning of Soviet Spain. The victorious social revolution in Spain will inevitably spread out over the rest of Europe. For the Fascist hangmen of Italy and Germany it will be incomparably more terrible than all the diplomatic pacts and all the military alliances."

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