Counter-Revolution in Spain

Introduction and Translation
By JOSEPH WAGNER

INTRODUCTION

The articles on Spain, prepared by me, for the One Big Union Monthly, consisting largely of translations appearing in the current and two previous issues of this magazine, were not meant to serve as news articles of the Spanish War Front.

The news about the ups and downs, of victories and defeats, on the various fronts of fighting Spain are abundantly covered by the papers of all shades and creeds. Each of them colors the news according to the interests or the principles of the writer writing them up, or of the publication printing them. The lessons drawn from the developments of the events, differ from writer to writer and from publication to publication. That cannot be helped, and perhaps it should not. The questions involved in the Spanish struggles are much too complex to be lightly disposed of.

Neither was the intent of these articles to pass judgment over what is being done in Spain by the anti-fascists, and to take sides with one or another of the various contending parties and groups, that grim circumstances brought together in a common fight against the gory beast of fascism.

But even though we are not so situated as to take a direct hand in the great struggle on the Iberian Peninsula, we are greatly interested in it, because, as workers, and as revolutionists, we feel that the struggle going on in Spain is our struggle as well.

Different political parties, radical groups with varying philosophies are thrown together to form the anti-fascist front. And although they have one common aim, these component groups are separated by class interests and by philosophical and political views. In the course of the war in Spain the political supremacy of what is called loyalist Spain, has shifted more than once, and before the end comes there will be very likely more shifts taking place. With these shifting, tactics of struggle also change. The ones at the helm at a given moment are prone to claim credit for every victory that takes place while they are holding the reins of government, blaming the opposition for the reverses taking place. The opposition looks upon it in just the opposite way.

Because of the complexity of the question, I intended to place before the readers of the O. B. U. M. the views of serious working class observers, and who, moreover, had first hand knowledge of the situation, and speak not by hearsay, but from actual observation.

In this issue I present an article by R. Louzon, one of the founders and present editors of that admirable and well known semi-monthly, French syndicalist magazine, "La Revolution Proletaire." The article appeared in the second July issue of the magazine mentioned.

Fellow Worker Louzon is one of the old guard of the pre-war French General Confederation of Labor. He is still a French syndicalist with the old revolutionary, non-political meaning of the term. He was personally acquainted with Haywood; has closely followed the development of our own I.W.W. with great sympathy ever since the I.W.W. was founded. In spite of his multiple activity in the French labor movement, he has been closely watching our own General Defense Committee cases and at times has made financial contributions towards them. At the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain, where Louzon is well acquainted in the revolutionary world, he went over immediately to Catalonia, to secure first hand information and to be able to write understandingly in his magazine. He has visited Spain often in the last year, and made faithful and objective reports of his findings to his readers. The following article is one of his latest.

NOTES ON SPAIN

When I wrote in this magazine, nearly a year ago, my "Notes on Barcelona" they were notes on Revolutionary Spain, as the subhead indicated. My notes of today, however, are on the Counter-revolutionary Spain.
I left Spain by the end of May; I returned there at the beginning of July. One month is a tremendously long time in revolutionary... of counter-revolutionary times. During that month of June the events have succeeded themselves with great rapidity. Things, that could be dimly outlined as possible hypothesis in the May days, have since been realized in an accelerated rhythm.

The present situation in Spain can be summed up in two facts:

First: total loss of power by the working class;

Second: transfer of power into the hands of the Spanish fascists, by the intermediary of the communist party.

**Working Class Loses Power**

When I say that the working class lost the power, I am, naturally, not alluding to the fact that now the CNT has no longer representatives either in the Valencia or the Catalonian governments. Cabinet ministers are but cogs in the bourgeoise-capitalist State machinery, therefore it is not by its participation in the machinery of the bourgeois State machinery, but by the creation of its own institutions, that the working class develops its own power.

If the working class of Spain was partially in power until recently, that was due to the fact that alongside of the bourgeois State power the working class was able to impose the power of its own organs: the labor unions, workers' committees, etc.

Today, this power of the working class is non-existent. It cannot be stated too often, that political power is essentially—one can almost say, exclusively—a power of repression; it is the police force and the armed force. Today the working class of Catalonia no longer has police or armed power.

The "Patrols of Control" of Barcelona and vicinity, of which I spoke in my former article in this magazine, have disappeared. This workers' police force, that was functioning since August 1936, alongside the police force of the State, was dissolved last month, and this time not only on paper, but in fact: all of its members have been disarmed, the most active of them were imprisoned, the leading militants have "disappeared," an euphemism signifying murdered.

The same holds true of the workers' militias. Wherever these militias existed, whose duty it was to enforce revolutionary order upon avowed or camouflaged fascists, especially along the extensive frontiers, they have been completely disarmed, their best elements were imprisoned, a certain number of them murdered.

In Barcelona and in the entire Catalonia, nothing was left in the way of organized armies except the mercenary corps of the State police: the assault guards, the civil guards, carabiniers.

The same has taken place with the army. Working under the Catalanian C.N.T. War Minister, the C.N.T. formerly had the control over the army of Aragon; after this Cabinet post was taken over by General Pozas, an appointee of the Valencia government, the commanding machinery was lost by the workers' organizations and it fell into the hands of the State.

The labor militants, the creators of the militia, who after the "militarization" were supposed to merely transfer their title, from "delegations" to army "ranks," are now obliged to ask the Minister of War for confirmation of such transfers and the Minister confirms those of whom he thinks he has nothing to fear, while postponing indefinitely the confirmation of those he doubts, thus eliminating the ones and placing the others in the position of being under obligation. By this twofold scheme the entire hierarchy of the army passes under the direct control of the State.

Thus, the workers' police and army has been done away with. To be sure, there are still men on the police force, especially among the assault guards who are at heart with the working class and with the C.N.T.; certainly the soldiers of the Aragon front and a good number of "confirmed" army officers have not forgotten their origin and when the day comes they will be on the side of the people and not with the State. And certain it is that besides the visible arms, there are plenty of hidden arms, for the Catalonian proletariat, it seems, has conserved its hidden arms. But, all that does not alter the fact that today there are no longer any regularly and publicly functioning workers armed institutions. The working class still has means of fighting the power, but it no longer possesses organs of power.

Removed from the police force and from the army, the working class is, just as naturally removed from all auxiliary institutions of power. The representatives of the F.A.L. (Iberian Anarchist Federation) have been excluded from the popular courts of law, where the representation of the workers has been reduced to a feeble minority. The C.N.T. representatives likewise have been excluded from a large number of municipal councils that have replaced the former municipal revolutionary committees (but which were nothing in reality but committees, since they had been composed of representatives of all the anti-fascist organizations, in a determined proportion) under the pretext that the C.N.T. has not repudiated their protest movement in the days of May. The district workers' committees can no longer function and there hardly passes a week without some new decree being issued superseding the representation of the C.N.T. as well as of the U.G.T. in this or that Council or administration.

Everywhere the State, the bourgeois State, con-
stituted in its traditional forms, re-establishes its sole and entire power. In Catalonia as in Valencia, the working class is now completely excluded from power: It has lost the power. Such is the first truth that we have to establish, but there is a second.

What the Spanish Communist Party Is

The much lauded policy of the Spanish Communist Party, as dictated by Stalin, is well enough known by now: it is the defense of the bourgeoisie and of the private property; no more expropriation is to be countenanced; the landed proprietors to be re-established into their “rights”; the small and so small employers to be organized in “labor” unions. Such is the program. A program of hindrance and of destruction of the conquests of the revolution; a program of bourgeois defense.

Such a program of bourgeois defense, naturally should have attracted the entire bourgeoisie, and it has not failed to do so. The bourgeoisie flocked in masses into the communist party and into its annex, the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia, as well as into the Catalonian U.G.T. (General Workers Union), founded for their convenience. They joined partly because the communist party program was their program, their class program. But above all, they joined for reasons of personal security. To be suspected of fascism, was until recently, a very serious matter. But, by the very nature of things, the bourgeois is always in danger of being suspected of that very thing. What better way of avoiding suspicion than of having in his pocket a membership card in the communist party or in one of the locals of the U.G.T.?

The Spanish communist party and its annexes have, therefore, become bourgeois organizations not only in virtue of their program, but also by their social composition. But this first fact was bound to be soon followed by a second: Of all the bourgeois, the most interested in averting the suspicion of fascism were the very ones who were actually fascists. And that is how the communist party in its composition, soon became not only bourgeois, but above all, fascist bourgeois. Whether in Valencia, where the district secretary of the Gil Robles party, among others, is at present a member of the communist party, or in villages far removed from Catalonia, the most active members of the communist party are former members of the “Patriotic Union” of the CEDA, etc. etc.

Republican Spain Passes into the Hands of Fascism

It naturally follows that the Spanish communist policy is not only a bourgeois policy, but actually, a fascist policy. Through the racket in connection with the furnishing of arms to the Spanish govern-

ment, the Russians having succeeded in giving the State powers to “their” party, the fascist followers of the communist party made the party follow a policy favoring Franco and the Russians were much to dense to notice it. The facts, however, are evident.

While hundreds of the militants of the anti-fascist organisations were murdered and thousands imprisoned, and while the help rendered to Spain by the foreign organizations were systematically sabotaged, the Falange, yes the Spanish Phalanx, the Phalanx of Franco, is making open propaganda and is recruiting almost openly in Catalonia. The Falangistas arrested by the workers’ Control Patrols (before their dissolution), for attempts of sabotage, are now free. And while the anti-fascists arrested during the last two months, especially the foreigners, are lamentably treated, kept in airless cells from which they are not taken out for a moment, and are forced, like the prisoners in Calle Coregga in Barcelona, to go on hunger strike, the imprisoned fascists enjoy all manner of favors, so much so that the anti-fascist prisoners of Carcel Modelo of Barcelona demanded that they be granted the same rights as enjoyed by the fascist prisoners in the same prison! Finally, as they cannot absolve all the fascists without too much open scandal, the authorities decided to free them on bail of several thousand pesetas. The most notorious fascists, who are rich or who have rich friends, can thus leave the prison . . . for an indefinite time.

Government of Defeat

The facts related above are serious enough, but what follows is even more so. It is openly said that the fall of Bilbao was due to treason. The fall of Bilbao is the masterstroke realized by the fascists, through the medium of the communist party, by the overthrow of the Caballero government in May.

To relieve the pressure on the Biscayan front, the Caballero government had prepared a vast offensive to the south of Madrid, where the front is not far from the Portuguese frontier, with the intention of cutting the rebel armies in two. Everything was ready for the offensive that was to begin early in May: 75,000 men had been assembled with adequate war materials on hand.

But, a couple of days before the launching of the offensive, the communist party torpedoed the Caballero government, forcing his cabinet to resign and replacing him with the Negrin government, whose first task as government head was to countermand the prepared offensive; the assembled troops were scattered and during the entire month following nothing was done to relieve the hard pressed Biscayan front. The Basque minister’s letter of resignation (because of lack of aid from

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the central government) was prevented publication by the censors, and the Madrid journal C.N.T. was ordered suspended because it had published it nevertheless. But nothing was done to save Bilbao; it was necessary for the city to fall, for so it was decided by the fascists in the Stalinist party.

Only after the fall of Bilbao—and the fall enabled Franco to withdraw, without danger, a part of his northern troops—that they started an offensive, for after all it was necessary for them to appear doing something... especially at the wrong time.

The sum total of all the above facts cannot leave room for doubt: The Negrin government is entirely dominated by treason. The cleverness of the fascists, setting under the cover of the Stalinist stupidity, makes the Negrin government, nilly-willy a government of defeat.

If the Negrin government holds out, if the evil forces that brought them to power are not destroyed, the defeat will succeed each other continually. That will be certain victory for Franco and the certain defeat not only of the revolution but of the republic itself. This is the second truth that needed telling.

**Causes for the Defeats of Russian Imperialism**

The defeat of the Spanish republic will also be a defeat of Stalin. And on this subject it is interesting to note that the serious defeats suffered in the last ten years, by Russian imperialism, are all due to the same cause.

The Stalinist imperialism had experienced two notable defeats: that of China with the boosting of Chian Kai Chek, and that of Germany, with the ascension of Hitler to power. Spain is reserving him a third defeat, for he will either be beaten inside of republican Spain by the other anti-fascist forces, or, if he maintains his hold over the Spanish republic, it will be beaten by Franco. But the cause of these three defeats are one and the same. Odd as it may appear, that cause is Stalin's absolute lack of understanding of the class struggle: in all three cases the policy that lead Stalin to defeat consisted in his disregard of the class antagonism.

In China he imagined himself able to marry the fish to the hare: the bourgeois Kuomintang to the revolutionary workers and peasants. To hinder such a marriage, the Kuomintang massacred everything that was Russian. After having furnished Chiang Kai Chek the means with which to conquer all China from Canton to Peking, Stalinist imperialism found itself expelled, from one day to another, by this same Chiang Kai Chek.

In Germany, Stalin imagined that the avengeful Hitler will turn to be a better support for his struggle against Poland and the other neighbors on the western border of Russia than the timid social-democrats. The two dictators could divide the existing spoils if the States emerged from the Versailles treaties, just as their royal and imperial predecessors had, in the past divided up and annexed Poland. Therefore every time, before the advent of Hitler, the communists of Germany were ready for action, the Communist International sternly forbade them doing anything.

But, the attraction of the "corridor" did not cut much figure in the class interests of Hitler's backers. No matter how anti-socialist the Stalinist regime had become, the absence of private property in Russia was not agreeable to them; no matter how opposite to the October revolution Stalin's regime was, to the bulk of the world proletariat, especially to the German working class, it appeared to be the continuator of that revolution and the symbol of their emancipation; hence the fight inside of Germany against communism and against the working class was not compatible with an alliance with Russia. That is the reason that Hitler, brought to power by the Ruhr magnates to extirpate communism and socialism in Germany, could not base his foreign policy on a Russian alliance, but on the contrary on a struggle against the U.S.S.R. From Hitler's coming to power Stalin expected a strengthening of the Rapallo treaty; the first act of Hitler was the destruction of Rapallo.

Under different forms, this same misunderstanding of the fact that the class struggle dominates the foreign as well as the domestic policies of States, is the cause that leads Russian imperialism to its defeat in Spain.

It was Russia that saved Spain last November. The fact is incontestable: it is foolish to deny it or to belittle the fact. Without the Russian planes and without the International Brigade—which was a communist creation, it would have been all over for republican Spain. The blockade of Mr. Blum—the greatest treason ever committed by social-democracy in the entire course of its history—was accomplishing its work. Just as it was Russian help that enabled the Kuomintang to conquer China, it was Russia that enabled the Spanish republic to save Madrid... and the rest.

But, again, the same as in China, where Stalin, believing thus to best serve his imperialistic interests, ordered the communist party of China to collaborate with the Kuomintang, to uphold the interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie, just so in Spain, he forced his party to defend the Spanish bourgeoisie against the revolution.

The result will be the same: as in China where one nice day, Stalin saw his followers massacred at Nankin and at Hankow by the soldiers of Chiang Kai Chek, so in Spain, he will wake up one of these days to the fact that his party is but
The C. N. T. Continues to Live

In the presence of the situation as described above, what is the C. N. T. doing? How does it react to the loss of power by the proletariat and to the fascist control of the bourgeois power?

The C. N. T. is playing dead. It keeps itself carefully from reacting. The C. N. T. allowed without the least protestation the disarming of the Patrols of Control; it forbids any retaliation for the murdering of its militants (official figures: 60 C. N. T. members "disappeared"), and against the imprisonment of its members (official figures: 500 C. N. T. members imprisoned) it is opposing only respectful interventions and legal defense.

In the meantime its forces—so it seems—are intact. In Valencia as in Barcelona, the C. N. T. press is the most widely read. One comrade even claimed—and his claim seems to be very nearly the general opinion—that the C. N. T. never was as strong as it is now, for the prestige it may have lost while participating in power, it now has regained, and the Stalinist's stupidity makes them grow stronger every day.

On the other hand, it is certain that it still retains its arms, keeping them in the most unexpected places.

Finally, the economic attainments of the revolution are being preserved almost entirely. As a general rule, the labor unions and collectives are functioning the same as before. Stripped of political power, the working class still retains economic control.

Thus in Puigcerdà, of which I said last month that I don't know whether the work of collectivization, that have I seen in February, is still in existence, and which is one of the places where the exclusion of the workers from power was most complete and most brutal (seven murdered since the end of May, without counting former murderers; 50 imprisoned. Continuous presence of 500 guards in a town of 4,000 inhabitants), the collectives are still in force almost entirely, according to what one of the local militants told me, whom I met in the middle of July: only the rayon cooperative was closed; a few tailors and certain other bourgeois elements belonging to the UGT have seceded from the cooperative, "but, added the comrade, this was fine, for on account of them we were obliged to admit representatives of the UGT in the administration of the cooperative; now that we are to ourselves, we can go ahead more openly than before."

The C. N. T. unions in Puigcerdà have been dispossessed of their hall, but they have simply occupied another hall, a little less imposing than the old one. And, they are only waiting for the arrival of their paper supply, in order to resume publication of their local Libertarian Youth paper, SEMBRADOR (The Sower).

Thus, under the storm, the Puigcerdà comrades have bent down, after the storm they are straightening out. And this is not a specialty of Puigcerdà; it is, I believe, the traditional policy of the C. N. T.: "let the storm pass."

To let the storm pass and saving everything that can be saved. Advancing step by step, and maintaining its least attacked and most solid positions as intact as possible. These positions at present are the economic sectors. Not to engage its forces in order to save them for the favorable moment, when circumstances are favorable for a new offensive.

However, this is not a new tactic with the C. N. T. and the F. A. I.: it is their traditional, historical tactic. When the foreign comrades, alarmed by these repeated retreats, of these abandoning positions of primary importance without a struggle, communicate their fears to the Spanish fellow workers, they invariably receive the following answer: "This is not the first time that we are persecuted, we have known many others; after every persecution we came out stronger than before. It will be the same now as it happened in the past."

The optimism that results from the strength of the C. N. T., a strength that is not based on the mass of its members, nor on the wealth of its treasures, but, if I may say, on the morale.

Through their principles, through their manner of being and of acting, the C. N. T. and the F. A. I. have deep and manifold roots in the entire Spanish proletariat. Due to that, they dispose at any moment, an important number of active militants who can, at the first favorable opportunity raise the flag and take spontaneously the necessary action. The labor union action and the anarchist morale are at present so rooted into the body of the Spanish proletariat that they cannot be separated; that bond cannot be severed without destroying the proletariat itself.

It is that, no doubt, that explains the expectant tactics followed at present by the C. N. T. and which perhaps justifies it.

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