

**Autumn No 7.**

**M**ILITANT  
**I**NTERNATIONAL  
**R**EVUE

40p



**The British  
Trade Unions.**

**Spanish Revolution 1931-37.**



GUERNICA by Picasso

# INTRODUCTION

In this issue of *Militant International Review*, we are printing an article about developments in the British trade unions, and an analysis of the Spanish revolution of 1931-39.

Both these questions assume enormous importance before the British working class today. The crisis of British capitalism has reached catastrophic proportions. Despite a de facto devaluation of the pound amounting to nearly 20% — far deeper than the 1967 devaluation — and despite the limited if temporary success of the Tory government in driving down the real wages of the workers — we see the economy crashing headlong into the worst balance-of-payments crisis in its history. Britain has now become a net importer of cars! Despite the effects of devaluation — equivalent to 47% in terms of the Deutschmark — even the traditional strongholds of British industry are being eaten into, on the home market as well as in the export field. This is an historic watershed in the long, agonising decline of British capitalism. Whatever the bumptious utterances of the Tory Cabinet Ministers, who are still plaintively talking about "a strong, expanding economy for many years", Britain has slid from a second rate to a third rate power, outpaced not only by the super-powers but by some of its new trading rivals of the EEC and by Japan. The British Empire, which gave a protective blanket to industry during the 1930's slump, has vanished into thin air. The British economy shivers naked awaiting the cold blast of a new recession and a trade war.

Spain lost an empire too. The economic blizzard of the inter-war period drove all sections of Spanish society into turmoil, into huge social convulsions which brought them again and again to the brink of revolution and of counter-revolution, until the final savage victory of Franco and the slaughter of a million workers and peasants. Only now, three and a half decades later, have the deep wounds in the flesh of the Spanish working class healed, and a new period of revolution has begun. In the inspiring battles of the next few years in Spain, they will have to learn the lessons of the previous defeat. The heritage of betrayal by the Stalinists and the Social Democrats will be overcome by that of Bolshevism, the October Revolution, and the indomitable will of the working class the world over to rebuild society on socialist foundations.

Not only the Spanish, but the British workers and those of all countries need to learn these lessons. The British ruling class will be forced to try to impose the same solution as its Spanish forebears — to throw all the burden of the economic crisis on to the shoulders of the workers, at the cost if necessary of smashing their organisations to smithereens. However, that is no easy task! The British trade unions, ten million strong, represent a formidable obstacle in the path of the ruling class. They cannot be suppressed or destroyed without years of ruthless civil war. But the capitalists at present have no forces for such a fight. They could not even maintain their attempt to apply the infamous Industrial Relations Act.

Instead they have once again tried to intimidate the trade union leaders into acting as policemen on their behalf. Meanwhile, Enoch Powell, the Tory Right and the racist propaganda of the press are all being used to build up a reactionary force for deadly use in the future against the Labour movement.

But 1973 is not the 1950's. Against a background of vicious attacks on the workers' living standards and rocketing prices, the workers have exerted an enormous counter-pressure on the trade union leadership. This in its turn has had a healthy effect on the Labour Party itself. Resolutions in favour of sweeping measures of nationalisation of the banks and the monopolies, with minimum compensation and under workers' control and management, have been passed at several trade union conferences and at the Labour Party Conference. The Labour Party Young Socialists are campaigning among the youth and within the Labour movement for the adoption of a full socialist programme and the implementation of Clause Four. The new upheavals within the trade unions are the first stage in a mass reawakening of the Labour Movement. The era of the British Socialist revolution has begun.

It is in this context that we are printing the following articles.

# The British Trade Unions



## the giant awakens !

BY PETER TAAFFE

"There is no power in the world which could for a day resist the British working class organised as a body."

Thus wrote Frederick Engels 92 years ago in an article dealing with the British unions. Yet there is nothing more 'modern', nothing which more effectively sums up the situation in Britain today, than these lines from Engels.

In the stormy events of the past three years, over and over again the enormous latent power of the Trade Unions and Labour Movement has been confirmed. The giant of labour has been merely required to flex its muscles to overturn one plank after another in the 'counter revolution' outlined by the Tories when they came to power. By comparison the retreat of Napoleon from Moscow was orderly !

This is most graphically illustrated by the short but spectacular history of the Industrial Relations Act. The very introduction of this Act was a reflection of the fact that the class balance of forces were weighted overwhelmingly in favour of the working class. The capitalists looked towards the State to "redistribute the balance of bargaining

power in favour of the employers" as the engineering bosses quaintly put it in a secret memorandum to the National Industrial Relations Court, (published in Tribune 18.5.73). Their hirelings in the Tory Party, by means of the Act, hoped they could roll back the wheel of history. They sought to limit the right to strike, to infringe on the right of solidarity action, to financially weaken the unions, to undermine the closed shop and to force the union leadership to act as open 'labour lieutenants of capital', as policemen over the rank and file.

And there were many, even within the Labour Movement itself, who expected that this programme could be carried out, that British society was moving into the era of the 'corporate state' of 'neo-fascism' etc. It was the Marxists alone who pointed out that the rights of the working class had been gained in generations of struggle and at the cost of enormous sacrifices in blood and suffering. These conquests cannot be erased by the stroke of a legislative pen, even one wielded by the 'Mother of Parliaments' itself. It is one thing to pass an Act, it is another thing entirely to carry it out.

Any attempt to implement the Act would meet with the furious resistance of a working class and Labour Movement far stronger and more cohesive than at any time in its history. Marxists have pointed out that one effect of the post-war economic upswing was undoubtedly to soften class relations, in the advanced capitalist countries. But the other positive side of the boom was that it enabled the working class to heal the wounds of the mass unemployment and misery of the inter-war period, to build up and strengthen the organisations of the Trade Unions. Over 10 million workers are now numbered in the ranks of the unions compared to just under 5 million in 1930. The shop stewards number a colossal quarter of a million, a tremendous increase compared to the inter-war period, when they were only established in a few industries with the best union organisation.

For the Tories to challenge head-on this power of the workers' organisations was a guarantee of a gigantic social explosion, which would either lead to a general strike or a retreat on the part of the bourgeoisie. And so it proved to be. The I. R Act had the opposite effect to what its authors intended.

## EFFECTS OF THE ACT ...

When the 'cooling-off' procedure was used against the railwaymen it only served to harden the determination of the workers. Its use against docker's in July last year set in motion a wave of solidarity action which would have resulted in a general strike, if the Pentonville Five had not been released. The TUC were forced to go on record for a 24 hour general strike.

The use of black-legs like Shute in the docks and Goad in the engineering industry to undermine the principle of the closed shop and class solidarity rebounded on the capitalists. The threat of widespread retaliatory action was sufficient to force the employers to lay-off with generous terms of course, the self-styled proponents of 'liberty', (ie, for the bosses) on the shop floor.

All these events have forced the strategists of capital to reassess the Industrial Relations Act. A measure which promised to usher in an era of 'social peace', has had the opposite result. While it may have cost the unions a certain amount - the AUEW has lost £770,000 in financial impositions and an extra £200,000 in forfeited income tax concessions, this is as nothing to the colossal sums lost in the biggest strike wave since 1926. At the same time it has been powerless to fundamentally curtail the rights of the working class.

Confirmation of this has recently come from the most unlikely quarter, the Commission on Industrial Relations, (C.I.R.), itself a creature of the Act.

Thus in its annual report, the C.I.R. says in relation to the closed shop,

" By the end of 1972 the only approved closed shop was that between the British Shipping Federation and the National Union of Seamen. Yet our enquiries indicated that the practice of the closed shop was still widespread."

The Act had declared the closed shop not as 'illegal' but as 'void' !

Even the hard nosed engineering capitalists, who would dearly love to eliminate the power of the unions in their industry, have understood that they would be called on to pay a high price in terms of strikes, sit-ins etc, in order to rid themselves of the 'scourge' of the closed shop. It is a price they are not prepared to pay at this stage. In the memorandum mentioned above, arising from secret talks with Donaldson N.I.R.C. chief (which in itself speaks volumes about the so-called 'impartiality' of this body), they informed him that;

"the closed shop provisions are viewed with suspicion .....employers generally prefer to suspend non-union men rather than use the law." (our emphasis)

The ineffectiveness of the Act is further highlighted by the comments of the C.I.R. on legally binding agreements. Searching for some crumb of comfort it hopefully declares;

"We did.....come across some instances of legally binding agreements", but then disconsolately adds, "In general these appeared to have been the result of oversight." (our emphasis).

In the face of such evidence even the most zealous defenders of the Act find it difficult to put on a bold front in its defence. One of those bourgeois commentators forced to eat his own words is Eric Jacobs, industrial correspondent of the 'Sunday Times'.

"Those of us who thought the Act would have a useful and constructive effect on industrial relations now look a little foolish."

It was those ideologists of capitalism like Jacobs who pressed on the Tories the need to arm themselves with all the necessary legal paraphernalia of the Act.

But the medicine they prescribed has only worsened the patients malady. They declaimed against strikes, particularly the unofficial short/small strikes of the '60s. Sure enough the Act diminished these but at the cost of 'larger and longer' official strikes, with an increase in the number of days lost rocketing from almost 7 million days in 1969, the year before the Tories came to power, to 24 million last year.

The Act was fashioned as a weapon for Big Business, to be used as a last resort. Instead, all the 'small fry', both the employers and those scabs like Goad, have rushed forward to exploit the Act for their own ends. This prompted the journal of Big Capital, 'The Times' to characterise it at the time of the imprisonment of the dockers as a :- ....

"disordered slot machine, which produces a succession of unforeseen results, mostly raspberry flavoured."

The spokesmen of capitalism have called either for its complete abandonment, its shelving until a more suitable occasion arises, or such amendments as will render it completely ineffective. Meanwhile they are using their Courts to prevent the 'small fry' from going too far in embroiling them in a confrontation which they wish to avoid at this stage. Hence the decision of the Appeal Court against Shute and his campaign against the closed shops in the London docks. They are not prepared to risk losing the very healthy profits which loom, for the sake of Shute's laudable principles.

## THE POWER OF THE UNIONS

Thus at every turn , the accumulated power of the Trade Unions is seen. Due to the restraints imposed by the leadership only a portion of this power has been brought to bear on the Government. Yet this has been sufficient to compel Heath to do a U-turn on all aspects of his programme - on 'lame ducks', on 'pruning the nationalised industries' etc. That the Tory Government has been allowed a temporary victory on Phase II of its wage freeze is

a consequence of the restraining influence of the leadership. At each stage they have attempted to blunt the bitter hatred felt by the mass of the workers to the Tory Government. Without them, the capitalists, their Government and their State would not be able to last more than a few days.



## **MINERS SHOWED THE POWER OF UNITY**

The Trade Unions are the single most powerful force in society. Even Victor Feather, by way of a warning to the Tory Government declared last year that, "no one can do anything to the unions, that the unions do not want done." Yet he fears, along with the rest of the T.U. leadership, the consequences of this power even more than the capitalists. No better proof of this can be furnished than the virtual sabotage of this year's May Day strike. Despite the lack of a lead from the top a magnificent 3 million workers came out in the greatest May Day for 50 years. But a successful one day stoppage with a turn-out of 10 million in demonstrations and meetings would have given an enormous impetus to the workers' opposition to the policies of the Government. By binding the class together, as a class, it would have demonstrated to even the politically inexperienced worker, the power of the Labour movement once it moves into action. It would have allowed the possibility of explaining to all strata of the working class the stark realities of the capitalist system and become the starting point for a campaign to force an election to bring down the Tory Government.

For these very reasons the T.U. leaders feared a successful May Day. For the whole period of the Tory Government they have acted as a gigantic brake on the movement of the working class. Nothing illustrates this more than the ill-fated attempts, one after another to seek an accommodation with the Tory Government. The latest efforts were preceded by the secret negotiations between the TUC, both Left and Right, and Heath. This at a time when the 'generals' of the TUC were supposed to be co-ordinating the battle plans for May Day!

Unless the unions are won over to a policy of Marxism, of uncompromising class struggle, the process whereby the leaders seek the embrace of the State is inevitable, irrespective even of the sincerity of the present 'left' union leadership. Such is the potential power of the unions that unless they are used as a lever to change society the union leadership must try to come to an agreement with the Government. The tendency for this growing together of the T.U. tops with the State machine is inbred in the whole situation. In a thousand different ways the capitalists strive through pressure on the tops of the unions, to bind the latter to the State. The recent announcement that Feather will be joining the B.B.C. as a part time director when he vacates his position at the T.U.C. in September is just one glimpse of the methods employed by the capitalists.

But try as they will, there is no possibility of the union leadership reaching any lasting agreement with the Government. The pressure of the workers through the union branches has compelled them to break off past flirtations. So too in the future. It will be the class struggle which will protrude its ugly face between the hapless suitors. The Tory offensive and the terrific resistance of the working class is not at all accidental. Its causes lie in the desperate economic plight of the British bourgeoisie, and its attempts to solve its problem at the expense of the working class.

## ECONOMIC DECLINE

Almost daily its own press spell out in the language of facts and figures the catastrophe which faces it in the future. Although ship building is not a decisive industry for the capitalists today, it was a field where British capitalism was once pre-eminent. The decline in its power can be measured by the drop in Britain's share in world shipbuilding, from 50% in 1950 to 5% today. The doling out of National Assistance to the tune of £160 million has done nothing to arrest the decline. It has been eclipsed as a leading ship building power by Japan, West Germany and Sweden. The same catastrophic falling behind of its nearest rivals on the world market can be seen throughout the whole of British industry. The use of machine tools is one of the barometers of the health of the capitalist economy. Yet while 35% of machine tools in Germany are over ten years old, and 37% in Japan, fully 59% are in Britain.

Latterly the ruling class has taken refuge from these uncomfortable realities in the prophecies of its economic witch doctors who fortell of a re-birth of the British economy! This on the basis of a couple of months favourable trade figures. This is like a senile old man who dreams of recapturing his youth on the basis of one day free from illness.

The economy is undoubtedly growing by about 5%, fuelled by the deliberately inflationary measures of the government. So far as the capitalists are concerned there is a 'boom' but a very shaky one. The serious capitalist economists have pointed out that it is bound to go 'bust' as have all the other post-war 'booms' of the British economy.

In the process of the upswing which is under way the insoluble contradictions of British capitalism will be revealed. British capitalism is increasingly beaten not only on the world market but in its own back yard. 50% of imports into Britain in 1971 were manufactured and semi-manufactured goods. The 'boom' will have the effect of sucking in these exports into the home market, hence aggravating the balance of payments problem. Already capitalist economists are speculating on a deficit in the balance of payments of the order of £750-£1000 million this year.

An attempt to correct this deficit, as in similar situations, through the cutting of state expenditure on the social services, housing etc, and/or 'consumption' i.e. the wages and standards of the working class, can only act to depress 'demand' and will lead to a slowing down in production. The cycle of stop - go will recur again. The sunny optimism of the strategists of capital will evaporate. With increasing vehemence they will lay the responsibility for the economic collapse at the door of the Trade Unions.

The working class will in turn be forced to resume the battle as the consequences of the Tory Governments Phase 2 and 3 hits home.

Already retail prices have officially increased by 9% between March 1972 and April

1973. Inflation will be given a further twist by the measures of the Government itself. The 20% money supply increase last year, the introduction of value added tax, together with the upsurge in world commodity prices affecting food, will mean an enormous increase in the cost of living of the working class. The acceptance of the formula of £1 plus 4% will actually mean a cut in the living standards of the working class.

At the same time the capitalists are piling up enormous profits. I.C.I. as a typical example tripled its profits in the first quarter of this year to £63 million, compared to the same period last year. Together with revelations of lavish living and corruption arising from the Lonrho, Poulson and other scandals, this will fuel the workers opposition to the Governments measures.

At the present time the mood of the working class is one of watching and waiting, more so of the advanced sections like the dockers, miners, car workers, engineers etc, than the inexperienced workers who have engaged in struggle over the past period.

The advanced workers have paused because they have understood that a battle at this stage would involve an all-out struggle, not just against the employers but against the Government as well. Hence the mood of hesitancy which seems to pervade the whole of the working class. This mood has given renewed hope, if not confidence, to the bourgeoisie and has confounded those tendencies in the Labour Movement who take a superficial view of events, imagining that the movement of the working class proceeds in a straight line.

But such periods as we are passing through, - and this can only be very temporary - are inevitable in the awakening of the working class. The experiences of all revolutionary upheavals since the Russian Revolution itself showed the great upswings from Right to Left and back again which were concentrated into nine explosive months. In this case the tempo of events was enormously speeded up by the war. Trotsky explained that even the social problems such as the land question, the solution of which could have been postponed for a couple of years, was subordinate in the minds of the masses, to the war. Unless the peasants could end the war they would not be alive to enjoy the land. But there was no way of ending the slaughter except through the carrying through of the Revolution.

The Spanish Revolution on the other hand, was of a much more protracted character, unfolding as it did over the period 1931-37. This will be the form which the Revolution in Britain will take. And we are at the beginning of this process now.

## **BRITISH WORKERS FALL BEHIND**

The upheavals of the last three years have not failed to leave their mark in the consciousness of the masses. These events have prepared them for the great battles which loom.

Once the new wave of price increases begin to bite, there will be further convulsions. The struggle will be resumed with even greater intensity. The working class has increasingly understood that the ruling class, in looking to their own solution, are attempting to reduce even further their meagre standards.

The British workers have paid dearly for the falling behind of British capitalism. In terms of wages, hours, housing and social services they are worse off than most of their Continental counterparts.

The differences between Germany and Britain for instance were highlighted in a recent 'Times' article —

"Stuttgarts' standard of living is 80% above Tynesides". (21.2.73)

The British worker employed in manufacturing industry works an average 43.6 hours. This compares to 37.5 hours in Belgium, 35.9 hours in Denmark, 42.3 hours in Ireland and 43 hours in Germany. Only the French worker with an average working week of 44.5 hours puts in longer hours.

In fact the much vaunted increase in standards of living of the British working class is

based on overtime. The press, T.V. and radio never tire of picturing the British worker as insatiable for overtime, no matter how low the working week. This does not prevent the same media from carrying reports of absenteeism, or the unprecedented rise in industrial neuroses, arising from the inhuman conditions in the factories!

In fact as a TUC report has recently revealed,

"Overtime is highest amongst those earning 30p an hour and diminishes as earnings rise to £1 and hour or more". In other words only dire economic necessity forces the working class to chain itself to the factory for long hours.

In terms of holidays as well, the British workers are generally way behind their European brothers and sisters, as the following table of average paid vacations for one years work shows.

| <u>Britain</u>            | <u>Italian</u> | <u>Danes and Belgians</u> | <u>Luxembourg</u>                    |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 15 days<br><u>Germany</u> | 13.5 days      | 18 days                   | 19.5 - 26 days<br>(depending on age) |
| 19 - 24 days.             |                |                           |                                      |

If National holidays are included then even the Italian worker ends up  $4\frac{1}{2}$  days better off !

So far as wages are concerned a recent report on the shipbuilding industry pointed out that average earnings in the European yards in 1971 were 75% higher than in the UK. The authors of this report were exultant at what this could mean for the shipbuilding bosses,

"Providing the U.K. cost advantage persists in the future increased capital expenditure - up to European levels - should result in an overall competitive advantage." (in British Shipbuilding 1972).

The British bourgeoisie look towards the same happy situation as a whole. Their spokesmen in the Confederation of British Industries have spelt out in unmistakable terms, their solutions to the long term crisis facing them, and what this will now mean to the working class.

This was shown clearly in a speech by Clapham, C.B.I. President on 1st February of this year. He pointed out:-

"Our calculations show that aggregate real net trading profits in 1969, 1970 and 1971 were lower than in any year since 1948.....They are in all probability the lowest in history.....the rate of return of capital for manufacturing industry on a replacement cost basis before tax, has fallen by almost two thirds, from 16.7% in 1949 to 5.7 in 1970, with a peak of 19.2% in 1950"

These figures bear out the Marxist arguments on the tendency of the rate of profit to decline. This arises from the enormous amounts invested in the post-war period, in buildings, raw materials, machinery, what Marxists call constant capital, in comparison to the amounts invested in variable capital, ie the labour power of the working class. The profits of the capitalists come from this variable capital which diminishes as a proportion of the total capital. Hence the tendency of the rate of profit to decline. Capitalism is able to temporarily overcome this tendency by a variety of methods, but in the final analysis the profitability of the capitalists can only be achieved by cutting the share going to the working class. They are incapable of reversing the trend - although in 1972 and into 1973 they have succeeded in arresting the decline (in 1970 not just the rate but the mass of profit fell by £500 million).

In the process they have compounded the misery of the poorest section of the working class. All the diseases of the 1930's rickets, malnutrition etc. have begun to reappear -

the British Medical Journal has estimated that between 25 and 30% of the population live in households which do not receive desirable levels of dietary intake.

The attempt to impose further sacrifices on the workers is bound to ignite an explosion. The capitalists take comfort from the present lull, but a better gauge of the masses' preparedness to struggle is the increasing strike wave over the past three years. And alongside the heavy battalions of the working class, new sections have been drawn enthusiastically into the battle.



## HOSPITAL WORKERS STRIKE

The strikes of the hospital workers, civil servants, gas workers and teachers, and previously the council workers and postmen, are a graphic reflection of the undermining of the social reserves of capitalism. Even bookies, clerks and Mayfair hairdressers have recently taken strike action. Nothing more illustrates the change in the fortunes of the British bourgeoisie than the revolt among the civil servants, teachers and even the customs officers. In the inter-war period they were the reliable props of capitalism, a 'bulwark against social revolution'. Instilled into them was a false sense of 'superiority' over the industrial working class.

Such notions lost their basis as these layers have understood that their refusal to resort to industrial action has resulted in their falling behind manual workers. The National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO) has recently pointed out that their members have fallen behind the unskilled labourers.....

"The Government's own level of £1,378 for a man with three children to be eligible for family income supplement, is more than the maximum clerical grade one."

They have been forced to consider the use of the same weapons as the manual workers to achieve any improvement in their miserable standards. The growth in factory-like conditions

for clerks has strengthened this awareness. Even the upper layers have been touched by this mood. Hence the strikes amongst the 'administrative, financial and professional services' increased by 30% last year, doubling the number of days lost compared to 1971.

The hospital workers strike in particular revealed the great capacity for struggle on the part of the most exploited and downtrodden workers once they are aroused, and move into action. They threw themselves into the fray with an élan which is the hallmark usually, of the big battalions of the working class. The votes for strike action were one indication of this. Thus in the vote amongst COHSE members, the area with the lowest majority, the South West, still had registered 73.5% in favour of strike action. The majority was 92% in Northern Ireland! The hopes of these workers were dashed by the refusal of the TUC to organise real solidarity action and the failure to call a national stoppage by their own leadership.

But the strike will have served its purpose in 'bleeding' these workers in industrial action. They will be turning over the lessons in their own minds and preparing for future battles. During the strike, the older, more complacent stewards who were prepared to collaborate with the management were elbowed aside and replaced by younger more determined workers. Union branches which existed only in name have been revived and continued to function after the strike was over. The process of renewal of the unions in the hospitals is underway.

This new fighting mood was reflected at the recent NUPE Conference.

The same spirit was shown at the recent Civil and Public Servants Conference. The decision to refuse to pay out the increases in pensions, although wrong, was nevertheless an indication of the bitterness which has taken hold of this section of the working class.

## **TUC's "SOCIAL CONTRACT"**

This is the background against which the TUC and the Tory Government are endeavouring to establish their 'social contract', a marriage between labour and capital.

But the bitter opposition of the working class to the most reactionary Government in living memory is the obstacle upon which both partners will stub their toes.

The serious representatives of capitalism are not interested in mere paper deals. They fear that such is the mood amongst the working class that the TUC will be incapable of 'delivering the goods', that is binding the Labour Movement hand and foot.

This is what 'The Times' recently said in relation to Vic Feather.....

"(He) was redolent with infectious good humour and open armed reasonableness, which betokens all his public utterances. But Mr Feather is the Dr. Jekyll of the TUC." Then looking to the working class it says...." There is also Mr Hyde and while Dr. Jekyll is beguiling us with bland prospects of universal goodwill just around the corner, it is Mr Hyde who is determining the present and who seems to have determined the past." It warns the TUC that "until Dr. Jekyll can show he speaks for Mr Hyde" no lasting agreement is possible. The engineering bosses put it less delicately.....

"One requirement of this (an agreement) is that the TUC should be able to command the necessary authority among its members."

But 'Mr Hyde' remains implacably opposed to the machinations of 'Dr. Jekyll'. It is impossible for the TUC to get the compliance of the working class to a policy of open class collaboration.

The cosy chats will end in a barrage of mutual recriminations. The T.U. leaders will be forced to reflect in a distorted form the pressure of the masses in the Trade Unions, which is for the rupture of all relations with the Government. The workers are for a campaign for its overthrow rather than the proffering of the velvet glove by the Knight errants of the TUC.

# PROCESS OF TRANSFORMING UNIONS UNDER WAY

The hobnobbing of the T.U. tops with the hirelings of capital has served to confirm the mistakes of those tendencies on the fringe of the Labour Movement, which have written off the traditional organisations of the working class as completely bankrupt. This fact is re-affirmed in their eyes by the outright 'betrayal' of the Right Wing of Feather, Chapple etc. and the prevarication of the Lefts such as Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon.

Lenin was very fond of repeating that the movement always pays for opportunism with a bout of ultra-leftism. The incapacity of these infantile sects to understand the viability of the official Trade Unions condemns them to sterility and to eventual extinction.

In seeking to by-pass the official organisations - and what is worse infecting some militants with the same virus - they fail to see what is taking place before their eyes. All the big strikes of the past three years have shown that pressure from below has compelled the official T.U. leaderships to put themselves at the head of the workers by calling strike action.

Even Chapple in the EETPU was forced to head, from behind it is true, the power workers strike.

In this is revealed the dual pressure on the T.U. leadership. As explained above, they can act as a brake on the movement of the masses; the Right Wing blatantly and consciously, the 'Lefts' because they lack a clear class outlook and Marxist programme. But this same leadership rests on the mass base of the rank and file. It cannot ignore this base and when the pressure mounts it is forced to reflect in a distorted form the demands of the masses. They can of course only go so far. In the final analysis even the sincere Left leaders will be incapable of leading the working class to victory. They will be forced to attempt to rein in the mass movement.

But this does not alter the fact that masses will first channel their energies through the Trade Unions. If the working class was to display the tendency to by-pass their traditional organisations that would probably manifest itself first amongst the least experienced strata such as the hospital workers. Yet it is precisely the hospital workers who have revealed the opposite tendency to move into the existing union organisation and begin to refashion it to fit their needs.

The Trade Unions in Britain existed even before the French Revolution. In almost two centuries they have played an enormously progressive role in raising the material and cultural level of the working class and conquering for it those democratic rights which it enjoys today.

In the course of this struggle the unions have assumed a great authority in the eyes of the working class. That authority will not be lost until it has been demonstrated in experience to the broad masses, that the traditional organisations are no longer capable of answering any of their needs. Moreover there will have to already exist a viable alternative to which the working class can turn. The workers say to themselves that the Trade Unions are imperfect and have many faults - bureaucratism, lack of a real fighting leadership etc, but without them, things would be a lot worse. Their instinct is to transform these organisations into fighting instruments.

They are instinctively suspicious of the 'leaders', without followers, who offer them the alluring prospect of a short-cut, the creation of 'pure' trade unions.

And it must be admitted that their instincts are entirely healthy. King Midas, the figure from Greek mythology, possessed magical powers which allowed him to turn dross into gold. These tendencies have the Midas touch in reverse. Every 'golden' opportunity which they have touched they have destroyed. Thus in the mid-50's they counterposed to the Transport and General Workers Union, the 'revolutionary' 'Blue Union', (National Association of Stevedores and Dockers). This had the effect in the aftermath of the 1956 strike of hiving off some of the best elements in the Manchester, Hull and Liverpool docks into the

'Blue' Union, splitting the dockers into two separate organisations and in the process allowing the 'non-unionists' to grow.

This policy was justified by reference to the reactionary leadership of Arthur Deakin at the head of the T. & G.W.U., the 'impossibility' of ever breaking the bureaucratic strangle hold etc. Events have refuted them. The election of first Frank Cousins and then Jack Jones reflected the shift towards the Left on the part of the rank and file, which in turn was given an impulse by the new leadership.

The same evolution took place in the AUEW and the Miners union, with the election of Hugh Scanlon and Lawrence Daly.

## **DOCKERS MARCH ON PENTONVILLE**



## **GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS UNION**

In the case of the General and Municipal Workers it is only three years since the role of the union leadership in the Pilkington strike was invoked as proof that the G.M.W.U. was impervious to change. It was precisely this approach which was responsible for misleading some of the best militants in the St. Helens area.

The advice given to these militants to separate themselves from the G.M.W.U. by either joining a 'real' Union or setting up a 'special Glassworkers union', was responsible for allowing the possibility to exist for them to be victimised.

The Militant tendency opposed this course. We pointed to changes which had been wrought in other unions and which would also take place in the G.M.W.U. at a certain stage. We pointed out that St. Helens could become the spearhead for a real transformation in the union, if the best militants remained in the union and continued the struggle. This advice went unneeded and some of the leaders of the strike have to date, tragically been kept outside the industry and the union.

Yet it was the work of these militants through the Pilkington strike which was to force the leadership of the G.M.W.U. to give unprecedented official support to a whole series of strikes which broke out soon after. This, the leadership of even Lord Cooper was forced to do as a result of movement in the ranks. From the Pilkington strike could be dated the beginning of change in the G.M.W.U.

And recent events, particularly the last Conference of the union, has dealt a crushing blow to the false theories of the sects as applied to the official trade union movement. It revealed an unmistakeable move towards the Left on the part of the rank and file of the union. This was most evident in the unanimous acceptance of the resolution which called for the nationalisation of the monopolies under workers control and management. This is a harbinger of the big changes impending in the G.M.W.U. which will transform it from top to bottom.

Given the intensification of class struggle the same movement is bound to take place in the EETPU at a certain stage. The continued domination by the Right Wing of Chapple is mainly the consequence of the past manoeuvres of the 'Communist' Party. At the same time as they have ruthlessly suppressed any open opposition this leadership has skillfully used the fear of a return to the 'ballot rigging' methods of the past. But even the cleverest of bureaucratic intrigues cannot indefinitely postpone a leftward swing in the EETPU also.

## TRADE UNIONS - KEY QUESTION

One thing is certain:- the road to the working class passes through the Trade Unions in Britain. To use the 'bureaucratic stranglehold' of the T.U. leadership as an excuse for abandoning the struggle to transform the unions is a policy of impotence dressed up in radical sounding language. The proponents of this view imagine that the struggle is a primrose path, without difficulties or obstacles. But the Right Wing officialdom only act in character when they resort to arbitrary and bureaucratic methods. To interpret this as an indication of the impotence of the leadership, the hopelessness of working for change etc. is akin to those who would argue that the working class can never take power because of the power exercised by the capitalists through their State machine.

Marxists do not have a fetish on the issue of the Trade Unions, or on any question. The Russian Revolution took place with the Mensheviks, as opponents of the Revolution, still predominating in the apparatus of the Trade Unions. Even after the Revolution the Mensheviks were still, for a short time, at the head of some of the unions. Yet the Bolsheviks had an overwhelming majority of the working class with them and dominated the soviets. The Mensheviks were able to sabotage the union elections by their control of the apparatus and hence delay for a time the reflection within the unions of the real mood of the masses.

In 1923 in Germany also the official T.U. apparatus collapsed and it was towards the shop stewards committees that the working class turned.

The Revolution could have been carried through in Germany at this time on the basis of the shop committees, but for the mistakes of the C.P. leadership.

Perhaps then those who deny the importance of work through the traditional organisations are correct, that mere 'rank and fileism' and the advocacy of 'Councils of Action' are capable of circumventing the unions and winning the working class?

Theoretically it cannot be entirely excluded, although unlikely, that similar developments as in Russia and Germany, could take place in Britain. But even in this unlikely event, this would in no way diminish the importance of work through the trade unions as a preparation for such an eventuality.

At the same time there are important differences in the situation in Britain today and those which obtained in Germany and Russia.

In Russia the trade unions were much weaker, and embraced a much smaller section of the working class than in Britain today. The traditions of the British working class are to

move through and to transform their existing organisations.

Moreover the development of the revolution in Britain over a much more lengthy period of time, as explained above, allows the possibility of winning over the T.U.s to the programme of Marxism.

Even if one allows the possibility of a development in Britain along the lines of Germany 1923, the importance of the traditional organisations is not thereby cancelled out. On the contrary, only by combining work through the shop stewards committees and those ad-hoc organisations which spring up from time to time, with the task of seeking to move the unions in a leftward and Marxist direction is it possible to prepare for such a situation.

## COUNCILS OF ACTION

The 'rank and file' organisations of the sects - which are usually distinguished by the absence of the rank and file - are conceived as a substitute for the traditional organisations. A typical example is the entirely artificial manner in which they have attempted to recently set up 'Councils of Action', which is for them a fighting slogan of the hour.

Militant has endeavoured in the last three years to prepare those workers we can reach for a situation when 'Councils of Action' will arise in Britain. (See Militant Nos. 148+153) We were the first tendency in the Labour Movement to raise the possibility of a general strike, which is implicit in the whole situation in Britain. The situation is so explosive, the relations between the classes are so tense, that a general strike could burst out even during the next period. But the most likely tendency will be for the workers to direct their efforts to the electoral plane and the return of a Labour Government.

Nevertheless a general strike is possible at some stage over the next few years and this situation will see the creation of Councils of Action.

But they will not be the phantom bodies created by the sects, but the expanding of the already existing organisations. This was the process in 1926, with the Trades Councils fulfilling the role of Councils of Action.

It is entirely false to counterpose the slogan of Councils of Action to the task of winning the workers in the trade unions. Leon Trotsky, writing 40 years ago in relation to precisely this issue wrote:

"It would be the greatest mistake to 'play around' in practice with the slogan of shop councils, consoling oneself with this 'idea', for the lack of real work and real influence in the trade unions. To counterpose to the existing trade unions the abstract idea of workers councils would mean setting against oneself not only the bureaucracy but also the masses, thus depriving oneself of the possibility of preparing the ground for the creation of workers councils."

Trotsky's arguments could be applied with equal force to the tendencies today who are incapable of understanding the viability of the unions.

## FOR A MARXIST PROGRAMME

The shock of great events, which impend in Britain, will force the working class to move into action. The workers will pour into the unions as they have 'one in the past, looking for solutions to their problems. In the process of this movement the attempt of the leadership to maintain the so-called 'neutrality' of the unions - already undermined by the intensification of the class struggle - will completely disappear. The concentration and centralisation of capital, which has developed on a scale undreamed of, even by Marx himself, and its growing together with the State machine have forced every big struggle for reform, for wage increases etc. to take on a political character. In Britain this process has probably gone further than any other capitalist country. The hundred largest manufacturing companies have increased their share of Britain's net output from 15% in 1909, to 38% in 1963 to about 50% in 1970 - the same trend would lead to two thirds of output being controlled by these monopolies by 1980.

By a thousand threads the monopolies, the tops in the civil service, and army and the Tory Party, are bound together. More so than at any time before, the Tory Government is Big Business personified. The consequences of this are that in the course of the struggle, the idea of an alternative government, system and State power is posed to the working class. The advanced workers are already beginning to understand that no lasting progress is possible on the basis of a bankrupt British capitalism. This has already lead to a growing radicalisation in the ranks of the unions. The strategists of capitalism speak about the spectre of Revolution. Like the ghost of Banquo, no sooner do they think that they have banished it when it returns to haunt them.

The corporeal form of this revolution, so to speak, is for them the unions. Hence the constant theme of a 'state within a state' in their attacks on the T.U.s. The main danger threatening them they see coming from the direction of a radicalised movement, the whole tendency of which is to challenge the very basis of the system. The trade unions are in fact the embryo of this new society. This embryo can only break out of the old shell of capitalism by taking a clear political position, by adopting a Marxist programme.

**MAY  
DAY  
1973**



The growing political pressure exerted on the Labour Party already fills the ruling class with dread for the future.

There is a marked difference in their attitude towards a future Labour Government and the stand they took in 1964 and 1966 of 'friendly neutrality'.

The next Labour Government will begin, where the last one left off, with the pressure from the outset for the nationalisation of not just the run-down bankrupt industries, but the profitable sections. The adoption by the N.E.C. of the Labour Party of a programme for 'public ownership' of the 25 leading companies is one indication of future events. Also Anthony Wedgewood Benn's statement in relation to renationalisation without compensation of industries denationalised by the Tories - which was enthusiastically supported by the overwhelming majority Labour Party and trade union members - served to compound the anxieties of the bourgeoisie.

Right from the outset, the next Labour Government will be faced with radical demands by the working class and pressure from the capitalists that the brake should be applied.

Past experience has shown that they will choose the latter course. The capitalists will then use the inaction of the Labour Government to smear it as 'Socialism' in the eyes of the politically backward workers and prepare the way for splitting the Parliamentary Labour Party to form a National Government.

This in turn will push the Labour Party to the Left and a mass left wing will begin to take shape headed by the 'Left' Parliamentarians and T.U. leaders.

But these leaders will be incapable of giving backbone to this mass movement. Their programme and perspective have been fundamentally the same as those of the Wilson leadership. It is true that the adoption of the demand for the nationalisation of the 25 companies was due to pressure from a section of the 'Tribune' supporters on the NEC, palely reflecting the terms of the Shipley resolution passed at last year's Labour Party Conference, which called

for the nationalisation of all the monopolies under workers management and control, with minimum compensation based on need. But the old-guard 'Tribune' leadership lined up with Wilson to oppose this demand.

While every thinking worker would support it as a step forward it is a measure that has no possibility of being implemented without facing the most ruthless and desperate resistance from the ruling class. The threat of civil war would be posed by the capitalists to defeat measures which made 'serious inroads' into the profitable sections of industry.

If the Labour Government is to be called to face such a situation why not go the whole hog and propose the complete elimination of the power of the parasites who own the 250 monopolies which control 85% of the economy?

In reality the Labour leadership, if they cannot get the decision reversed will refuse to implement the proposal. If the 'Tribune' supporters on the N.E.C., who sincerely wish to see the victory of the working class, were serious about its adoption they would be organising a mass campaign to gain the support for this programme and the Shipley resolution passed at last years L.P. Conference. The active workers in the union branches and C.L.Ps are looking for such a bold lead.

The recent conferences of the GMWU, the AUEW, the NUM and the TGWU have all voted for sweeping measures, for nationalisation of the monopolies. This demonstrates the tremendous political effects on the workers' consciousness of the last three years' struggle. A major confrontation is coming this Autumn between the engineering bosses and three million engineering workers mobilised around a substantial wage claim.

The working class will be called in to pay a terrible price for the failure of the Labour leadership to show a way out of the crisis facing British society. The rise of the Fascist National Front with its 13% share of the vote at Uxbridge and 16% at the West Bromwich elections is a warning. The bourgeoisie, with its loss of Empire and its inglorious decay over the past half century has never been in a more exposed position. The icy blast of economic crisis will hit it with pneumonia. It will not hesitate in seeking a fascist cure for its sickness, as its counterparts in Spain, Germany and Italy pre-war.

It is not at all accidental that Whitelaw put the Trade Unions on the same plane as 'terrorists' or that the Tory Party in its pamphlet 'In Defence of Peace' has laid down plans for civil war against the Labour Movement in the next decade.

But before fascism will have the opportunity of using the deranged middle class to annihilate the Trade Unions and the labour movement, the working class will have the opportunity of taking power.

The most powerful lever for this social revolution will be the mighty trade unions, rearmed with a Marxist programme. The 10 million trade unionists in Britain with their families add up to about 30 million. Once set in motion they can bring to their feet, all those workers kept permanently in the dirt by the capitalist system, the low paid, the unorganised, ruthlessly exploited workers outside the ranks of the trade unions. To accomplish this task it needs a programme which links the day-to-day demands of the working class on wages, hours, a cut in the working week etc. with the central demand for the taking over of the 300 monopolies, and the organisation of a socialist plan of production by committees of shop stewards, housewives and small businessmen. The demand of the AUEW for a £35 weekly wage for 35 hours could be implemented immediately for all on the basis of such a programme.

A society which allows millions to live in misery and squalor, while a handful of Lornho directors or Tory Cabinet Ministers live in idle luxury and decadence will be something of the past.

This scheme of things is entirely possible if the trade unions and Labour Movement use their power to effect change

The Trade Union movement in Britain which has played an enormous role in the history of the British working class is destined, under the influence of a Marxist programme, to fulfil an even greater one in the future.

# The Spanish Revolution



## 1931-37

BY TED GRANT

Spain is in the first stages of a movement in the direction of revolution. The Fascist regime is completely undermined. The working class has recovered from the terrible defeat inflicted by the forces of reaction in the Civil War. The middle class is filled with hatred for the dictatorship and looking with sympathy to the struggle of the workers. The bourgeoisie is looking for a way out as it feels the pressure of the masses.

The repressive machine of the dictatorship has been enfeebled as it loses all mass support. From a totalitarian fascist state, it has been transformed into a military police state relying on the state machinery of oppression and repression - consequently it has become transformed into a Bonapartist rather than a Fascist regime. This marks the beginning of its downfall.

Once the workers, peasants and middle class begin to move into action on a concerted national scale, the hour for the collapse of the regime will have arrived. The great revenge of the working class will begin. By what regime will the Franco dictatorship be replaced? That is the immediate burning

question facing the Spanish proletariat and the Socialist Party and Young Socialists of Spain.

The British Marxists, in the spirit of international solidarity, (the Spanish Revolution is also their revolution, as is every revolution in the world) are turning out some material on the Spanish question for discussion within their ranks and internationally. This study of the origins and course of the revolution of 1931 - 1937 is not intended to be comprehensive but to deal with some of the highlights of this period of history of the Spanish workers' movement.

Unless the Spanish Socialist Marxists have a clear conception of these events, they will not be able to orient the movement and prepare policies in line with the perspectives of Spain at the present time. The lessons of history, if they are not learned, point to the situation where there can be an even more terrible debacle for the proletariat.

Marx and Engels worked out their theoretical conceptions on the basis of the experience of the working class, which they generalised into theory. The conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat was worked out by Marx on the basis of the experience of the Paris Commune.

Lenin and Trotsky prepared the victory of the revolution of October 1917 in Russia by the study of the lessons of the Paris Commune and the defeated revolution of 1905. Without this, the success of the Russian revolution would have been impossible. Similarly, without a thorough study of the lessons of the defeated Spanish revolution, it will be impossible for the victory of the Spanish Socialist revolution to be prepared in the coming days. The history of Spain is rich in lessons. "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." That is why, especially with the difficulties of the Spanish comrades in illegal conditions to have access to the necessary material, we make no apologies for turning out material for discussion in Spain. We consider it our imperative, fraternal and internationalist duty to discuss together with the Spanish comrades the class issues of the coming revolution in order to try to assist, however modestly, in arming the cadres of the Spanish Socialists for the tasks looming ahead. A victorious Spanish revolution would be a victory for the working class of the whole of Europe and would prepare the collapse of capitalism in Latin America and in parts of Africa. It has world-wide implications. Spain is the key to the international situation. Therefore, the responsibility of the leadership of the Spanish proletariat is all the greater. But the key to victory in Spain lies in understanding the lessons of the revolution of 1931-37. Trotsky once explained that the heroism of the Spanish workers was such as to have made ten victorious revolutions in the period 1931-37. Therefore a study of the lessons of this period will arm the cadres against repeating the mistakes of the past.

Spain even today remains a backward country where the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution have not been carried out. The bourgeois-landlord regime with a narrow economic base, and without mass support, was defeated in its colonial war against Moroccan independence in 1921-1925 and had to be rescued by the armies of French Imperialism. This inglorious and expensive adventure, with the exposure of the corruption and incompetence of the Monarchist regime, led to the setting up of the Bonapartist-Military Police dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. This, like all Bonapartist dictatorships, tried to balance between the classes in order to maintain the power of the ruling class. The C.N.T. Unions, the C.P. and the Anarchists were illegalised, but the Socialist Party and the U.G.T. were allowed to maintain a legal existence. Caballero, Leader of the U.G.T., even became a Privy Councillor under the dictatorship!

With the world economic slump of 1929, the basis of the regime was undermined and in an attempt to save the Monarchy the King dismissed Primo de Rivera in 1930. But the deepening of the slump hit Spain hard, and the bourgeoisie and landlords tried to unload the burden on to the shoulders of the workers and peasants. There was terrible suffering and hunger among the workers and peasants as their already low standards and wages were cut by the ruling class.

In the Municipal elections of April 1931 the towns, especially the big towns, with the exception of Cadiz, voted overwhelmingly for the candidates of the Socialists and Republicans.

In a rigged poll, in the countryside, under the pressure of the aristocracy and landlords, Monarchists gained the majority. But this did not reflect the real feelings of the peasants as events were to demonstrate - it merely showed the terror of the landlords and their agents the Cagiques.

In the towns, mass demonstrations of the workers took place when the election results were announced. Spain was moving towards revolution; so powerful was the movement that the Monarchy had to be sacrificed by the ruling class. Hurriedly Alfonso abdicated and fled the country. The Republic was proclaimed. The revolution had begun. A "glorious, peaceful, democratic era of reconciliation of the people had begun" according to the Socialist and Republican leaders. After the elections which followed, a coalition of Republicans and Socialists was formed. This coalition, because of the world capitalist crisis and the crisis of capitalism and landlordism in Spain, was unable to carry out its promises. A whole series of strikes of the workers were broken and repressed. Attempts by the peasants to seize the land were answered by using the police and troops to suppress these "illegal activities". The consequence of this was the growth of despair, apathy and inertia among the working class, and especially among the peasants. The C.N.T. and Anarchists engaged in a whole series of isolated seizures and local insurrections which were bloodily repressed.

## ULTRA -LEFTISM

The Communist Party, in common with all the parties of the then Communist International, had the insane line of "Social Fascism", denouncing all other tendencies in the labour movement as Social Fascists, and declaring the Republican-Socialist coalition government to be a "Fascist government". Thus they added to the confusion and disorganisation of the labour movement by this infantile and ultra-left policy.

This coalition or "Popular Front" government, as the "Communist" Party nowadays terms it, failed to solve a single one of the basic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Spain. (At the present time, by changing the name of such a coalition with the liberals, the C.P. pretend to change the reality of class relations.)

Today, within the ranks of the revolutionaries, within the Socialist Party in Spain, there is still a lack of clarity in our opinion on this question of the "bourgeois-democratic revolution" in Spain, so it is necessary to make a short analysis of the question which is borne out by Spanish experience.

For a hundred years the incapacity of the Spanish capitalists to carry the bourgeois revolution to a conclusion has always ended in the defeat of the revolution and the victory of reaction.

The Spanish bourgeoisie developed late on the scene like the Russian bourgeoisie. By the time it was fully formed it was already being challenged for the supremacy and leadership of the nation by the proletariat.

It had many links with the landowners and even the aristocracy. The banks had mortgages on the land. The landowners invested in industry. The church was simultaneously the biggest landowner and the biggest capitalist. Consequently the main task of the bourgeois revolution, the re-distribution of the land and the expropriation of the landlord class, as in Russia, could not be carried out by the capitalists without undermining the capitalist system. Faced with this situation, the Republicans, like the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats) in Russia, preferred always to do a deal with reaction.

As the description of events in Spain will show, the Republicans, representatives of capitalism, could not solve the tasks of the bourgeois revolution.

Lenin and Trotsky, especially the latter, in a country with a similar social structure, understood this problem. They led the workers to have an implacable and irreconcilable attitude towards the cowardly, liberal representatives of capitalism.

With the theory of "Permanent Revolution" advanced by Trotsky even before the 1905 Revolution, he explained that because the capitalists, in consequence of their vested interests, could not give the land to the peasants, take action against the Church and the monarchy - the bureaucratic semi-feudal state, but would always attempt to compromise with it, against the workers and peasants, then the task of carrying out the bourgeois revolution falls to the proletariat. But the proletariat, having come to power, abolished the monarchy and assisted the peasants to take the land, would not stop there. The proletariat, having carried out the tasks of the bourgeois revolution with the support of the peasants and petit-bourgeoisie, would not abandon power but would pass on to the socialist tasks by dispossessing the capitalists, but socialism cannot be built in one country. With the accomplishment of the revolution in Russia, the revolution would spread to the most advanced countries in Europe where the proletariat would be affected and stirred by the Russian Revolution.

The revolution in Russia developed as worked out theoretically by Trotsky. It provoked revolution in Germany, Austria and Hungary, and a revolutionary situation in France, Britain and Italy.

For many reasons which cannot be dealt with here, none of these revolutions and revolutionary situations ended in victory, and consequently the revolution in Russia was isolated. This led to the reaction of Stalinism which was to take a terrible toll of the revolutionary movement in the world, especially in Spain.

The Republican-Socialist coalition government of 1931-1933 was unable to solve the problems facing the Spanish people because it was a government including representatives of the capitalists. Peasants driven by hunger attempted to seize the land and were met by bloody repression by the police and army. Workers striking for higher wages were met by repression and force by the government. The despair and disillusionment of the workers and peasants, paved the way for reaction, especially in the countryside.

In the journal of the Communist Party, International Press Correspondance, while defending the policy of Popular Frontism, on Page 94 in its issue of 1st August 1936 there is an article entitled "Secrets of Spain" which admits the failure of the Republicans to solve the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

"'Que te de a comer la Republica?' (What are the Republic giving you to eat?) ask the peasants. This is one of the great questions in Spain. Where the land problem dominates politics, because out of 4 Spaniards 3 are peasants (at that time E.G.)....Extreme misery is without doubt a characteristic of them all.... About 1931, 1,173,000 peasants owned 6 million hectares and 105,000 landowners 12 million hectares. 5 million land workers (agricultural proletarians) owned nothing....

In 1873 the first Republic promised the peasants land. It was overthrown because it did not keep its promise. In 1931 the Republic of 14th April renewed the promise ... The law was passed on 15th September. It affected a large number of tracts of land, which were to be taken over with or without compensation.... Also the feudal or non-feudal properties of the Jesuits, as well as those of the Spanish grandees and the monarchists who took part in the coup d'etat of Sanjurjo, were taken over without compensation - farms - cultivated or poorly cultivated - with compensation - in other words, the land was not given to the peasants as freehold property: it was and is granted to them on lease, for which they pay rent to the Institute (of Agrarian Reform) ...This law was a compromise between the claim of the socialists and the resistance of the bourgeoisie; .... 5 years after the establishment of the second Republic agrarian reform had hardly started..."



## **PEASANTS JOIN THE REVOLUTION**

Caballero, leader of the left socialists, later condemned the socialist coalition with the capitalists in the first years of the Republic, but did not draw all the necessary conclusions from it.

By the time of the next elections in October 1933, reaction had taken advantage of the failure of the Republicans and Socialists. Women had been enfranchised and came under the pressure of the priests to vote for reactionary candidates. In the general disillusion, the right republicans of Lerroux and the clerical fascists of Gil Robles made big gains. The latter engaged in the usual demagoguery of the fascists.

But the coming to power of Hitler in 1933, the crushing of the Austrian workers in February 1934 alarmed the international working class. They saw

the suppression of the workers' organisations and the taking away of the hard-won rights of the German and Austrian workers. They were reduced to the condition of slaves. The Spanish workers were determined that the same thing would not happen to them.

Under the influence of this mood, Caballero secretly organised the importation of arms, and armed many socialist militants. Caballero issued a warning, as the Lerroux government moved further towards reaction and began discussions with the leader of the C.E.D.A. of clerical fascism, Gil Robles. The working class would never tolerate the coming into the government of the fascists as this would mean a move towards the destruction of their organisations and rights.

Lerroux vacillated and then took the C.E.D.A. representatives into the Cabinet. The Socialist Party replied by organising a general strike, and in the Asturias and in Catalonia, armed insurrection.

This resulted in the seizure of Asturias by the workers, and the organisation of the Asturian Commune. This could have succeeded were it not for the stupidity of the anarchists. Arguing that this was a "struggle between politicians" and had not the Republican-Socialist coalition suppressed and even shot them, they blacklegged and even transported on the railways the troops sent to crush the Asturian Commune. The Moors of the Foreign Legion under General Franco brutally crushed the movement.

Many workers were executed and tens of thousands imprisoned, but because the workers had fought arms in hand, the spirit of resistance remained uncurbed. Unlike the betrayal of the German workers by the Communist and Socialist Party leaders, it was impossible to consolidate a fascist regime.

There followed the Bien Negrio (The Two Black Years), but the struggle of the workers continued. The Communist Party, at the behest of the Stalinist regime in Moscow, had changed the "line". They dropped the Stalinist theory of "Social Fascism" without explanation. In its place they put the discredited theory, implacably condemned by Lenin, of coalition with the "Liberal" bourgeoisie, which they refurbished, in order to make it more palatable to their members and the working class, as the theory of the "People's Front" or "Popular Front".

The bourgeoisie in Spain found themselves in difficulties. They could not maintain the reactionary government in power. They felt the rising tide of resistance of the workers and of the peasants. Under these conditions they had recourse to the "Strike-breaking conspiracy" of the "People's Front" as Trotsky termed it. The P.O.U.M. and the Anarchists joined with the Socialist Party, Communist Party and "left" Republican Parties to form the Popular Front.

Because of the experience of the workers of the "left" Republicans in the period of 1931-1933, they were distrustful of the Republicans, and the leaders of the Communist and Socialist Parties, behind the scenes to their members, presented the People's Front as a "manoeuvre" where they were "using" the liberal leaders. That is the way they persuaded their members to accept it.

However, in the elections of February 1936, because of the rising tide of radicalisation of the workers and of the peasants, the Popular Front slate was victorious. As a result of the Popular Front agreement the left Republicans were given far more seats to contest than their real support in the population would warrant, with the result that their number of deputies as compared with the workers' parties was inflated. The Popular Front secured 268 seats, of which the bourgeois left republicans held 153. The Communist Party won 16 seats and the Socialist Party 98. The right wing parties secured 157 seats, and the so-called centre parties 48 seats. However, the vote for the right

was inflated by the terror and intimidation especially in the villages. So in reality the Popular Front victory was much greater.

The working class, which had learned to distrust the liberals through bitter experience between 1931 and 1933, immediately moved into action. Within days by direct action they carried out the Popular Front programme. Holidays with pay, 44 hour week and wage increases were imposed on the employers. Without waiting for an amnesty the workers marched to the jails, tore down the walls where necessary, and released the 30,000 political prisoners still languishing there as a result of the general strike and the Asturian insurrection. They imposed conditions on the employers not in the Popular Front programme. They expelled the fascists and blacklegs, who had been taken on after the defeat of 1934, from the factories. They forced the employers to re-employ the tens of thousands victimised and to reinstate them with two years back pay.

The reason for the Popular Front victory in the elections is indicated in the International Press Correspondence of 4th April 1936, Page 461.

...."Not one of the questions raised by the Bourgeois-Democratic revolution has been solved. On the contrary, they have become more acute. The unbearable political, social and economic situation which the parties of the right, by their reactionary and fatal policy, have created for the toiling masses, the workers, peasants, clerks, small shopkeepers, etc.

"The great experience which the masses have acquired in all their former struggles, and above all, from the insurrectionary movements of October 1934, the heroic deeds of the workers of Asturias.

## WORKERS UNDER ATTACK

...."The 2 years of government of the Radicals and the C.E.D.A. were characterised by a constant state of emergency. The workers and peasants were deprived of all their achievements. The strikes and movements of the workers and peasants for their demands and for immediate improvements were brutally throttled and suppressed. Attacks upon and murders of workers by the fascist gangs, who were protected by the Government were a 'normal' everyday occurrence in Spain. Workers' organisations were persecuted and dissolved and their premises closed, meetings and conferences of workers were prohibited.

...."100 death sentences, 30,000 imprisoned and tortured...The landowners and capitalists reduced the wages and worsened the already miserable living conditions of the workers....The wages of the workers in the towns were reduced from 10-12 pesetas to 4-5 pesetas. Wages in the countryside were reduced from 8-9 pesetas to 1.50 pesetas for men and 60 centimes for women for a working day lasting from sunrise to sunset...

"Unemployment increased from 536,100 in 1933 to 780,242 in 1935. As a matter of fact, however, there are more than 1½ million unemployed in Spain. The Budget for 1933 provided 873 million pesetas for public works, but the 1935 Budget provided only 628 million..."

In its issue of 29th February 1936, the I.P.C. deals with the results of the election victory.

...."But Spain shows also something else, namely that the People's Front is not a Parliamentary Coalition (?!).

...."The working people of Spain, however, gathered in the streets and shouted out with firm resolution 'We are not going to wait until Parliament meets and repeals or does not repeal the reactionary laws! Open the workers' clubs and meeting places at once! Open the prison gates at once!'

The armed forces appeared on the scene. But like the glorious fighters of the Commune and every people's revolution, the masses fraternised with the troops; they won them over to their side...

...."The fate of the coup d'etat (being prepared by Franco and the Generals) was thereby sealed. Of course the gates of the prisons were opened, just as the doors of the workers' clubs and meeting places had already been opened...

...."The state and municipal employees and also other workers who had been dismissed during and after October 1934 for having taken part in the fighting were reinstated and on the other hand, many employees who had acted as strike-breakers in October were dismissed (in the Madrid municipality alone over 1,000). The reactionary agrarian measures were rescinded.

...."We read in the London Sunday papers that the Chief of the General Staff, General Franco, the friend of Gil Robles, and General Goded the Chief of the Air Force, who were at the head of the proposed military coup d'etat were simply removed from their positions instead of being stood up against the wall. It is highly probable that all the authorities, all the judges who took part in crushing and sentencing the October fighters are still holding their positions."

## INDEPENDENT ACTION

The masses moved independently. What was necessary was to organise them, to increase and strengthen their distrust of the Liberal Government. As the Liberal News Chronicle of July 20th 1936 announced of the programme of Azana's Government...."With the support of the left (who still refused actually to join the Government) his (Azana's E.G.) Government announced a programme which was nothing more radical than a return to the constitution of 1931, with quite ordinary reforms such as new schools, public works and the revision of the banking system". It was necessary to begin the setting up of independent committees and prepare the taking of power by the masses. They clearly were not prepared to rely on the discredited liberals. In the same issue of I.P.C. on Page 294 in a letter from Spain, it reports in a way that unconsciously condemns root and branch the whole policy of Popular Frontism.

...."The masses of the people are reaping the fruits of their victory in a way very different from what happened after the fall of the monarchy in 1931. While at that time the masses poured on to the streets with a great deal of noise and rejoicing their action now is much calmer and more far-reaching...

...."In general the movement of the masses all over the country is aimed at independent action. All the efforts of the Government and its press to hold the masses back have only had the effect of increasing their militant spirit and strengthening their desire to act on their own." (My emphasis)

'Claridad', the organ of the Left Socialist Largo Caballero, writes as follows:

"We shall be on the side of the Government in order to help it to carry out the Joint Programme with all the necessary determination, even if this programme does not satisfy us entirely. We will, however, not give the Government our unreserved confidence as we did from 1931-1933. The lesson was too hard, and we will not renounce our right to criticise in order to maintain the vigilance of the working class, which is now marching forward to the final goal of our class, and, at the slightest sign of weakening, to set the working class itself against its present allies." (my emphasis throughout!)

This course, dictated by the distrust of the "Liberal" capitalist representatives by the masses, and their pressure, was nevertheless false. It

should have been the duty of the "Left" Socialists to put no trust in the lying promises of the Liberals, in the circumstances of Spain at that time. They should have reinforced and strengthened the distrust of the masses and prepared for the inevitable struggle by constructing organs of an incipient character even at that stage. That was what the masses were striving for even if inarticulately and in a certain sense unconsciously, as indicated by the attitude and actions of the workers parties.

Behind the screen, under the protection of the Popular Front Government, the conspiracy of the Generals, monarchists and fascists began immediately. A comedy of musical chairs began. Franco was transferred to the Canary Islands, General Sanjurjo and De Llano were moved to Balearics and Morocco and to Seville. The Army Command was shuffled around.

The Syndicalist, Socialist and even Communist Party press were warning of the danger of a fascist or military uprising. But the Socialist Party and C.P. all exhorted the Government "to take action".

This was impossible, if one accepts the Marxist analysis of class society. The Republicans were representatives, in one way or another, of capitalism. The power of capitalism depends on the power of the state machine, which is composed of Army, police, courts, prisons, etc. The ruling class, both in its liberal and conservative or fascist form depends on the support of army generals and officers of the army caste, police officers and the top civil servants, who have been specially selected and picked and educated to serve the capitalist system. To take action against these would be to undermine and destroy the whole basis of the capitalist state. To ask liberals to do this is like asking a tiger to turn vegetarian. For class reasons this is impossible!

That is why, right up to the insurrection, the bleats of the workers' leaders about the Government "taking action", if it had any effect, merely tended to lull the working class and to prevent them from taking the necessary action themselves.

The Popular Front Government did not take action against the Fascist Army Officers. How could they when it meant the destruction of the state machine on which the ruling class relies?

At the same time the big capitalists, lavishly supplying them with funds, unleashed their reserve weapon: the Fascist bands against the organisations of the working class. A little over two months after the "Great Victory", Cesar Falcon was complaining in the international press correspondence pages:

"Since the electoral victory of the people, the Fascist gangs, recovered from the momentary dismay....incited by the reactionary leaders, and especially by the big landowners, have started a campaign of provocation and assault extending all over the country...Madrid...villages...with the full co-operation of the Fascist elements in the Army and in the Civil Guard...They relied mainly on the passivity of the - Popular Front - Government". (my emphasis)

The Ministry of the Interior which had pledged itself to a constitutional and tolerant attitude, hesitated(-?-) to take those vigorous measures which both the nature of the offence and popular opinion were demanding...assault on the Socialist Deputy for Madrid....The young students belonging to the Spanish Falange tried to murder Largo Caballero and bomb the home of Ortego Y Gasset - Liberal.....  
- Liberal - ....The leniency of the Government only drove the Fascists further.

Jimenez Asua - S.S.P. Madrid Deputy - The Fascists immediately replied by murdering a judge....What speedy and drastic steps were then taken against

the Fascist provocateurs and criminals ? Not one. (my emphasis)

Constantly up to the period of the Army uprising in July 1936, the workers parties were appealing to the "Popular Front" Liberal Government to "Take action" They behaved as the Social Revolutionary and Menshevik leaders behaved after the February Revolution in 1917. Also the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Kamenev and Stalin, up till the arrival of Lenin, used the formula "support for the Provisional Government in so far as..." It was Lenins April Theses opposing this and demanding preparations for a new revolution, patiently explaining this to the masses, which won the overwhelming support of the rank and file, making the victory of the Russian revolution possible.

Adoption of this standpoint of the Spanish C.P. and S.P. would have resulted in the shipwreck of the revolution. The policies of the leaders of these parties were as if plagiarised from the policies of Menshevism and Social Revolutionarism. More correctly they were a helpless response to the pressures of class conflict and their failure to implement clear class policies.

## **OFFICERS TREACHERY**

After gaining the promises of the Government to take action and dissolve the Fascist organisations, two months later in the issue of June 4th of I.P.C., Vincent Uribes' writes, "the courts of justice, before which the Fascist are brought, either acquit them, or sentence them to two months imprisonment, a mere parody of justice. In innumerable cases Fascists have been acquitted of charges of murder. This mildness and complicity where Fascists are concerned contrasts vividly with the barbarous penalties imposed on the workers during the period in which reaction was in power, and with the punishment still dealt out by the courts to workers found with arms in their possession". (my emphasis)

The courts, the police, the army and the Civil Service top layers are the basis of the State, and consequently it was baying at the moon to expect the Liberal politicians who represent the bourgeoisie to destroy their own state machine and leave themselves entirely without defence from any assault by the masses, especially as the army officers had gone over overwhelmingly to the reaction.

In its issue of July 4th the I.P.C. reported in an article entitled "Secrets of Spain", "There are only a few Republican officers. I was told that there were 3%....then an officer who works for the chief of staff told me..."Your informant is an optimist...there are perhaps 100 officers of whom one can be fairly sure..."

Army generals and officers ignored orders, fraternised with Fascists and provoked the workers into conflicts. They ceaselessly prepared a bloody settlement with the workers.

Meanwhile, the Popular Front was incapable of carrying out fundamental reforms in the interests of the workers and peasants. The land question had bedevilled Spain for more than a century and a half.

The Liberals were incapable of solving the problem of the Bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Castrillo Santos in his book "Four years of Republican experiment 1931-35" declared '95% of the total agricultural undertakings in Spain comprise only about 5 million hectares of land, whilst 0.35% of the total comprise 9m. hectares. One million owners possess 6m. hectares, whilst

100,000 owners possess 12 million hectares. These statistics represent in the last resort the social problems of Spanish agriculture...'

I.P.C. says in its issue of June 4th "30,000 landowners own two thirds of Spain" and commenting on the role of the Spanish capitalists says:- "Sabotage of the agrarian revolution when it has gained office with the assistance of the revolutionary forces, and then a repentant return to the camp of reaction in order to crush with its assistance the rebellious workers and poor peasants and re-establish order".

In the 6 months of the Popular Front, 190,000 landless peasants gained land. This was two and a half percent of the peasants.

In the articles "Secrets of Spain" continued in the issue of August 1936 page 27, it deals with the attitude of the capitalists and big landowners.... "In words they declared their readiness to reconcile themselves to the democratic public which had been created in Spain. But actually they began with economic sabotage and underhand intrigues immediately after the overthrow of their government.



## PEASANTS GAIN LAND

The financial oligarchy began to transfer its capital abroad. The most despicable stock exchange sharks began to undermine the standard of the Peseta ...the big manufacturers demanded the annulment of the government measures which were intended to alleviate the want of the broad masses of the people, failing which they threatened lock-outs.

The big landlords, supported by the big bankers, threatened a "strike" by declaring that unless the government desisted from its plans for agrarian reform...they would not proceed with the autumn sowing...the government displayed extreme tolerance towards the reactionary elements who had suffered a common defeat at the elections. Despite the warnings and advice of the workers organisations, the leaders of the monarchists and the Fascists were allowed to remain in freedom, even remaining in high positions in the army, the navy and inside the state machine...."

"The condition of the peasants and the landworkers was that of starvation and semi-starvation. Less than one in forty received any land as a result of land reform: 190,000 out of 8 million....There are villages in Hurdes in Le Mancha...where the peasants in absolute despair revolt no longer. They eat roots and fruit...Thirty miles from Madrid, the villagers exist on soup made from bread, water, oil and vinegar....

"The Caciques still have some power....the usurers are still carrying on their rapacious business and not all the big landowners have been dispossessed" One has seen how in Almenoralejo, in the province of Badajoz, twenty millionaires are systematically starving one of the richest corners of Spain by refusing even to discuss the question of the wages of the landworkers...Not all the land is under cultivation.

...."What has the Republic given you to eat? Things should be speeded up to the starved peasants it seems....The peasant leaders calculate that the agrarian law plans 50,000 settlements a year, which means that it will take 20 years to settle a million peasants: more than a century to give land to all."

In Russia, before the October revolution, the bourgeoisie reckoned that it would take about a quarter century to measure out and divide the land and therefore land reform was impractical. The peasants under the leadership of the working class and of the Bolshevik Party achieved the agrarian revolution in days by seizing the land.

In Spain too the peasants began to seize the land, but unlike the Bolsheviks, neither the Socialist or Communist Party leaders made it their policy to carry out the agrarian revolution.

The peasants provide the broad infantry of the revolution, The working class under modern conditions is the decisive class and the driving force in the revolution. In Spain the gains in wages made by working class militancy were cancelled out by inflation. There were constant clashes between workers and employers. The police and the Fascists were used by the bosses to try and terrorize the working class. All these attempts failed. The workers were tempered and fired in the struggle. They were not demoralised by the failures of the trade union and Socialist and Communist leaders to press home the attack. The reaction grew more and more alarmed.

## DAILY CLASHES

After the murder of Calvo Sotelo, spokesman for monarchist reaction and Fascism, by civil guard policemen in reprisal for the murder of their Socialist police lieutenant by the Fascists, both the Fascists and Monarchists withdrew from parliament. This was in preparation for the Fascist rising.

This incident merely precipitated the preparations being made by the army generals since the February elections. The capitalists were thoroughly alarmed by the mood and combativity of the working class. Economically, financially, politically, they could see no other way out than the crushing of the organisations of the working class.

Daily clashes were taking place between the workers and the Fascists. On July 5th 1936 the Times reported "Two Fascists were murdered on Thursday....As a reprisal men armed with a sub-machine gun opened fire on Friday night on a group of men who were leaving their union headquarters, killing two and injuring five".

On July 13th the Times reported that on the previous day "six armed men entered the union broadcasting station at Valencia...and after having overpowered the speaker and his assistant, one of them announced through the microphone that Fascist forces had seized all the strategic points of the town. The men had disappeared before the police could arrive.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, Republican (?) and other left groups organised a demonstration of protest, which paraded the streets.

The mob set fire to the headquarters of the Regional Party, which is the principal party of the right, and the building was destroyed. (there was an attempt to burn the buildings of the newspaper ...The house of the right politician .Senor Lucia and the furniture of one of the largest cafes...several political clubs of the right wing were set on fire"

The economic situation is indicated in the report of the Times of July 14th 1936 almost on the eve of the insurrection. "The budgetary deficit has become chronic. The Peseta is sinking whilst trade languishes owing to the rising cost of production and failure to pay for imports."

## SHOWDOWN

The capitalists felt the need to crush the trade unions and workers organisations so that they could drive down the living standards of the workers. Because of the economic and political impasse in which they found themselves, one conflict after the other had been taking place between the workers and the bosses in industry and on the land. There were 113 general strikes and 228 partial strikes between February and July in the cities and towns of Spain. Therefore the capitalists were demanding that "order" must be restored, i.e. that terror must be used to subjugate the working class.

The classes were preparing their forces for the showdown. The Times of July 15th 1936 reported that " the monarchists and traditionalists issued a statement: Senor Calvo Sotelo's murder was a true 'state crime' without precedent in Spain."

"It (murder) had become possible as a result of the incitement to violence against deputies of the right expressed in parliament. The note adds that the Monarchists cannot continue to collaborate in state plunged in anarchy."

'On the other hand Lieutenant Castillo's funeral was arranged for 6. a.m. by the authorities to try and prevent demonstrations. In spite of this there were immense crowds. The "body was saluted with clenched fists. The coffin was draped in a red flag....Socialist militias with banners paraded."

The stage was being set for a struggle to the death between the workers and forces of capitalism and landlordism. The entire false policy of the leaders of the labour movement from February and throughout the civil war was indicated in the statement of Largo Caballero in an interview with the London News Chronicle on July 9th 1936, "Do you believe that the change from this Republican government to a Socialist government will be accomplished by a ballot?....That I do not know, - really there would be no Republicans without us. We are their strength and if we withdraw our support they are gone." (my own emphasis)

Significant words when one considers the course of the civil war and the actions of Largo Caballero and other workers' leaders in the ensuing conflict.

The army generals and officers had been preparing the rising from the first days of the Popular Front government. From July 17th the rising began in Morocco and the Canary Islands. The Popular Front Government tried to hide the news from the Spanish people. When it could no longer be suppressed, Quiroga the prime minister, and the government tried to pretend that this did not affect the mainland. The Madrid radio under the control of the government announced on July 18th that 'no-one, absolutely no-one on the Spanish mainland, has taken part in this absurd plot,' (The Times 20th July 1936) which would be quickly suppressed.

The news of the revolt had been radioed to the workers by the sailors of the Spanish fleet who seized the ships in the Moroccan harbours.

100,000 workers in Madrid demonstrated demanding arms. Quiroga, the prime minister refused. Announcing that "anyone who gave arms to the workers without his orders would be shot". Meanwhile throughout Andalusia according to the arrangements of the conspirators, risings began. Even according to Hugh Thomas, the academic "historian" of the Civil War, "Nearly everywhere on the 18th July the civil governors in the large towns followed the example of the government in Madrid, and refused to co-operate fully (!) with the working class organisations who were clamouring for arms." (page 185 of "The Spanish Civil War")

In Seville, Granada and Cordoba the Fascist officers were successful, because after demonstrating and demanding arms the workers were persuaded by the S.P. and C.P. leaders to go to their homes. The same night the officers armed with lists went to the workers quarters and summarily executed every T.U. secretary, C.P. secretary and S.P. secretary and prominent militants on whom they could lay their hands.

Quiroga's government tried to reach a compromise with the Fascist Generals. The Quiroga government resigned and an even more right-wing government of Martinez Barrios took their place.

## COMPROMISE

They wanted to make an agreement with the Fascist officers. They thought that a right-wing government could make a compromise.

Had it depended on the liberals the position would have been lost to fascism without a struggle. They feared the movement of the masses far more than they feared the coming to power of Franco. This was a class question. Without the treachery of the bourgeois liberals, the fascists would never have been able to seize any of the towns in Spain. The insurrection would have been stillborn. But much as they feared a fascist Spain, the liberal politicians feared an armed working class a thousand times more.

The Government remained passive in the face of the onslaught of the army. The pathological class fear of the liberals of an armed working class is shown by the reports from all over Spain. It is best indicated by the situation in Valencia more than two weeks after the insurrection. Out of the report of the Communist Party official journal IPC itself in its issue of 5th August 1936 page 987 under the heading...."VALENCIA"

"For fourteen days, since July 18th, a mutineer troop of the 18th cavalry regiment had kept the town in constant insecurity.

The workers of Valencia, half of them members of the UGT, half of them CNT had been demanding for days that the population should be armed. In order to reinforce the militia and the regulars (how many? EG) making them strong enough to storm this fascist nest. The Government members of the national Republican Union of Valencia (the moderate republican trend of Martinez Barrios) vacillated and finally refused to distribute arms. There upon the workers declared a General Strike, which had already gone on two days before the pressure of the masses finally made the Government and the military leaders decide on open action to take the cavalry barracks....within a few minutes the workers created barricades of motor lorries...the anti-fascist militia, the soldiers and the workers strengthened their positions and were ready to storm in spite of the irresolution of the leaders....the workers stormed into the barracks and took the rifles without asking anyone."

This speaks volumes for the attitude of the bourgeois "Peoples Front". "Allies" of the Communist Party. It hardly requires comment.

However, to the insurrection and counter revolution of the fascists the revolution of the working class came in reply. Beginning with the immortal workers of Barcelona the working class took the initiative.

Responding to the call of the sailors, who, in many cases had thrown the fascist officers overboard, the Barcelona workers marched against the army.

Quoting again the Stalinist correspondent of the IPC in the same article under the heading of "BARCELONA"

"Events have completely refuted the reformist theory according to which it is impossible for the working class in towns with modern broad streets to stand up to an army equipped with modern weapons. The masses of the people of Madrid, Barcelona and dozens of other towns in Spain, with a few pistols, daggers and their bare fists, have rendered an army hors de combat... Barcelona....the workers told us how the first machine gun was captured: they ran across the huge square with only a small force in the middle as cover, in the front ranks against a raging fire, the workers in the front ranks fell dead or wounded, but no one wavered, the advance continued till the workers captured the machine gun...when the artillery batteries appeared in the street...the workers mounted light motor lorries and drove suddenly from side streets, at speeds of 120 km.p.h. into the flank of the artillery."

#### "Madrid"

"With the exception of the flying corps, the whole garrison mutinied and it was the masses of workers (my emphasis) the Young Socialists, Communists and Republicans who mobilised with amazing rapidity and determination and captured the main positions of the fascist uprising."

According to the reports of the bourgeois correspondents the courage and ingenuity of the workers was unsurpassed. They marched against the barracks with legs of chairs, table knives and a few sporting guns snatched by breaking into sporting shops.

The Times of July 24th 1936 reports from Barcelona...."San Marti...streets swarming with men...carrying army carbines and pistols...armed women...in some lorries...we have taken all the arms from the San Andrea barracks?"

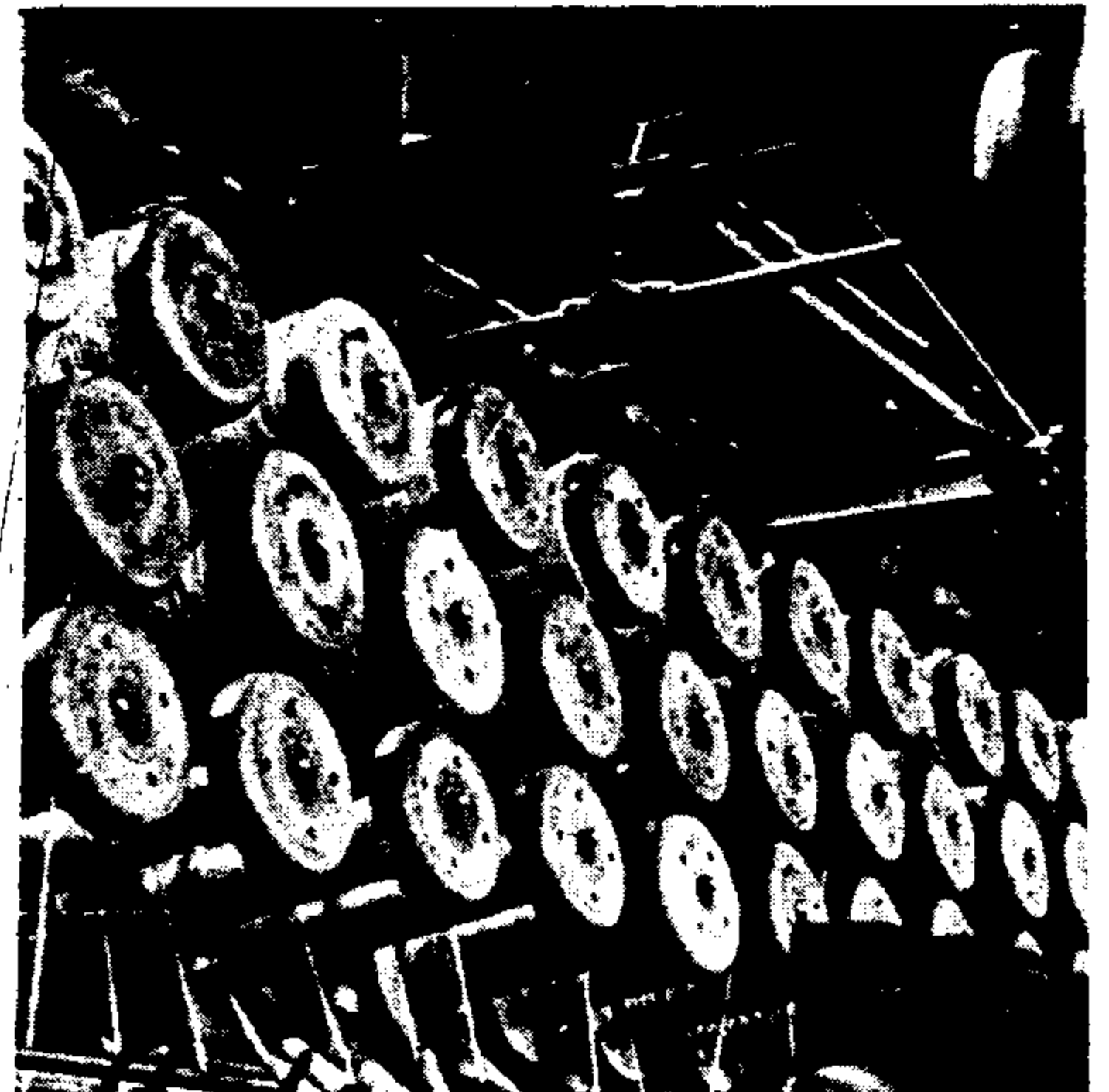
Whole books could be written about the way in which an unarmed working class spontaneously, without guidance from their leaders marched into action against the threat of fascism and defeated the fascists in most of the towns and in two thirds of Spain. Without the vacillation of the Communist Party and Socialist Party leadership in the South, it would have been all of Spain.

But now in so called Republican Spain the army was smashed. The police had disappeared and there was only one decisive armed force - the working class.

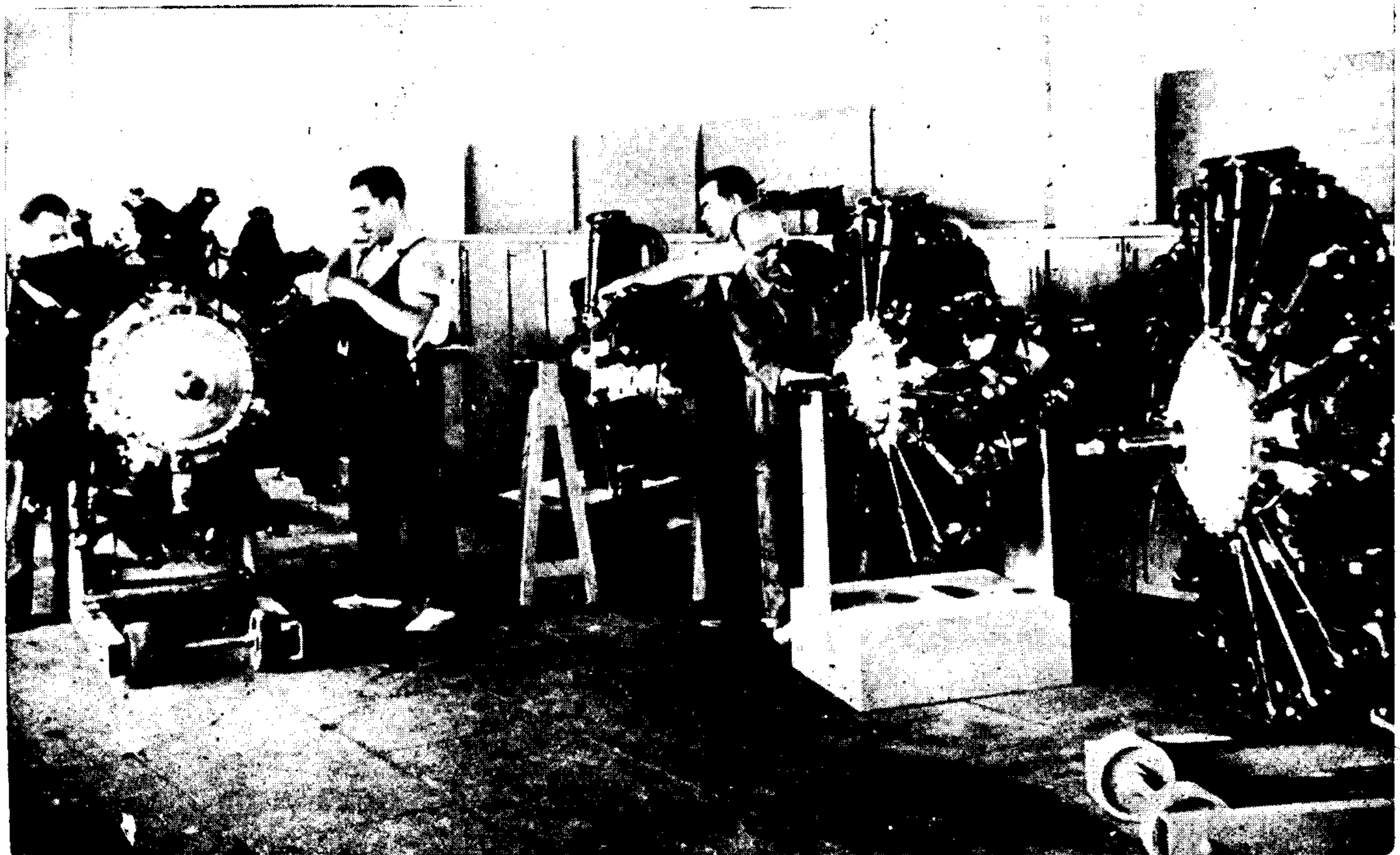
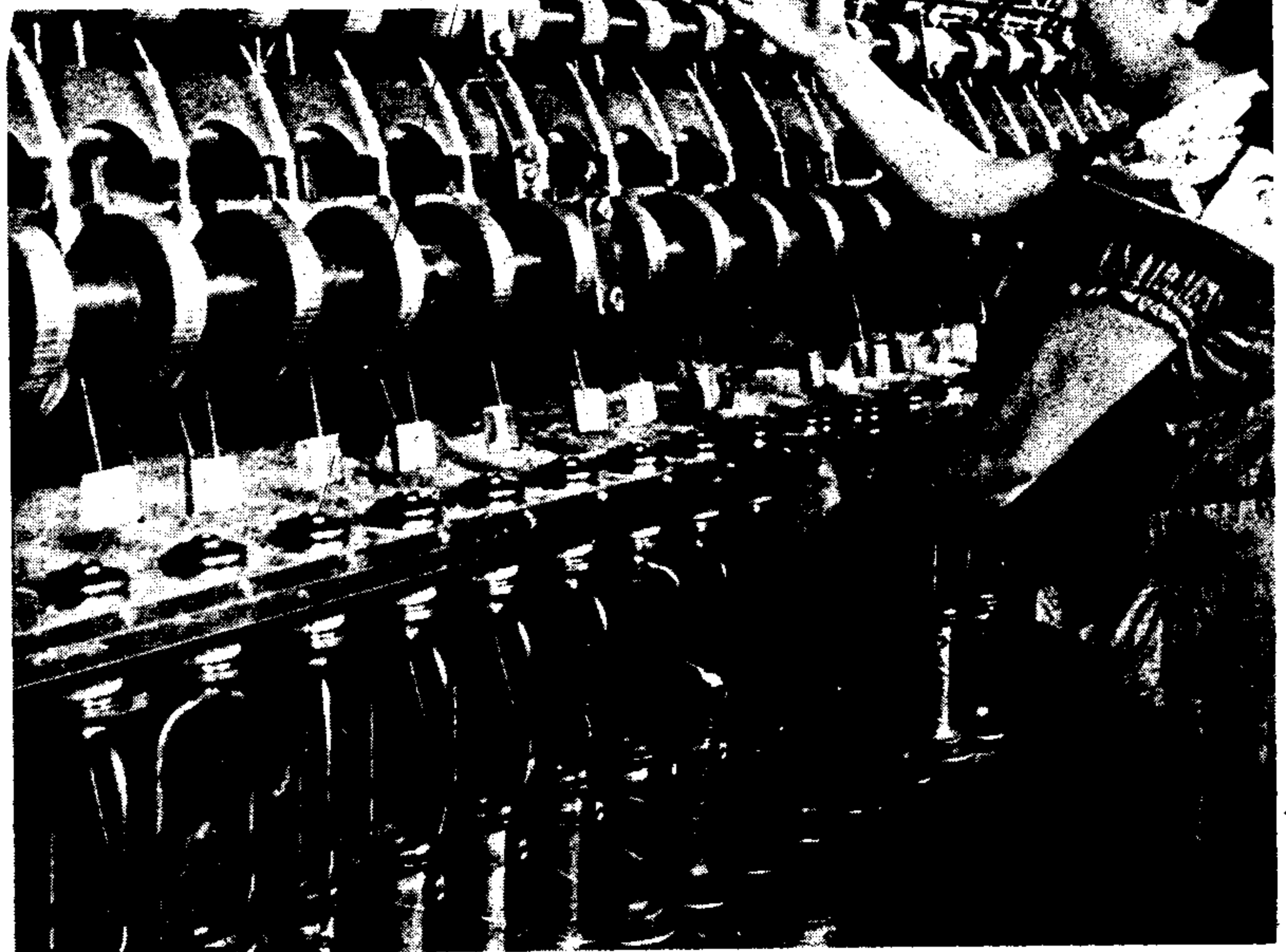
In the analysis of society made by Marx and Lenin they explained that the power of the state can be reduced to armed bodies of men and their appendages: courts, prisons, etc. In that sense the workers had smashed the capitalist state. They held the power: the "Republican Government" was suspended in midair. Most of the factory owners had fled and were supporting Franco. The workers seized the factories and began operating them without the capitalists.

The workers were instinctively trying to change society and begin the Socialist revolution. The capitalist class supported Franco. Azana and company represented nothing. The leaders of the proletariat refused to

accept this initiative of the masses. They made a coalition not with the capitalists but with the shadow of the capitalists: as Trotsky put it, the lawyers, M.P.s etc. of the liberal parties who in this situation represented nobody but themselves.



**WORKERS  
TAKE OVER  
THEIR  
FACTORIES**



The capitalists understood the situation clearly. The before quoted correspondent in the same despatch continued his report to the Times by stating what one of the armed workers said to him: "A man told me ...many officers got away and the others were arrested. The soldiers were told they could go where they liked. Is it not nice that the workers should have arms and power." (my emphasis) This rank and file worker understood as undoubtedly did instinctively the mass of the workers that the power was de facto in their hands. It was the leaders of their own organisations who blocked the path of the Socialist revolution and thus betrayed the revolution and led it on the road of a terrible defeat.

The spokesmen of the capitalist class understood clearly what was at issue. They posed the problem in serious terms, if from the opposing pole of the class struggle as the Marxists did. On July 23rd 1936 an article in the Times commented soberly: "An armed proletariat was in possession of the city (Barcelona). Who was to disarm them? What would the sequel be? Had the uprising of military and armed forces merely paved the way for proletarian rule in Catalonia? Such were the questions on every tongue, and at the government "war" headquarters it was evident that this question was of paramount concern."

Again indicating the real situation, the Times of July 25th reported: "Barcelona: revolutionary committees composed of anarchists and communists have intervened in factories to an extent that seems nothing short of their seizure"....the office and technical staff are working under the watch of the proletarians..."Catalan government issued decree declaring their intention to intervene in all banking in the region...appointing a banking commission" (Thus they prevented the workers from seizing control of the banks, a vital measure without which the developing socialist revolution could not go forward. Marx pointed out that the failure of the Paris Commune to seize the banks as a first step, was one of the main factors in its downfall. One of the first steps of the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution was the taking over of the banks.)

## DUAL POWER

"....Your correspondent has just obtained permission from the revolutionary committee at Puigcerda to return to Barcelona....."

This shows the existence of what Marxists have termed dual power. The government in Barcelona and Madrid had no armed forces on which they could rely. They were suspended by a thread. They could only exist by the toleration of the leadership of the workers parties who were not prepared to brush them aside and thus betrayed the revolution. For the time being they had to tolerate the workers incipient power. Participating in this betrayal or lack of understanding, was the leadership of all the workers parties: the socialists, anarchists, poumists, and above all, as the main force of counter revolution in the workers camp, the leadership of the Communist party. They resisted all the strivings of the workers and aborted the growing revolution.

In an article in the liberal News Chronicle of July 21st the correspondent relates: "My night's journey by car from Madrid to Barcelona...we were stopped every few miles by either gendarmes or pickets of workmen or peasants.

.....They (men of the Popular Front) attribute the collapse of their people in the southern cities partly to the fact that in Seville and Granada, for instance, the local authorities failed to act on the instructions (?) of the central Government and arm the workmen." (As we have already quoted Casares Quiroga, there were no instructions by the central Government. The liberal republicans found themselves without police or armed forces).

The Chronicle correspondent continued..."The part of Catalonia adjoining the French border is in the hands of a revolutionary committee composed partly of anarchists and partly of communists. The Soviet flag (Red Flag. EG) is flying on the town hall of Puigcerda.....Popular Front composed partly of workmen, partly of peasants...."

On July 23rd the News Chronicle wrote of "Crews of practically all the war ships seize control..." On the same date this journal of the Liberal capitalists in Britain, blood brothers of the Republican Bourgeois party in Spain wrote in fear and trepidation "Whatever might have been the menace of communism (i.e. the socialist revolution. EG) before the fascist generals chose it as a pretext to rise against the republic, it is a reality now." (my emphasis EG)

"Socialist and Communist militia and their elements in the army and navy have been the backbone of the defence against the fascist onslaught. They are fighting for the republic and the Popular Front but under the red flag.

The red flag flies from Malaga as well as banners marked "Union Hermanos Proletarios" - the sign made famous by the proletarian insurrection in the Asturias.

If the generals are beaten will the crews of the warships that have had a taste of blood and the troops that have worsted their officers be prepared to knuckle down even to republican officers and the workers of the cities be reconciled to a bourgeois republic which they practically alone defended ?

## REVOLUTION BETRAYED

The same issue contained the following item "In Northern Catalonia yesterday communists, socialists and anarchists, armed with weapons captured from defeated rebel troops, are in control. At Puigcerda the workers army seized the town hall, took control of the city." On July 24th the correspondent reports...."Talking with these members of the workers militia...hardened labourers, skilled artisans, young apprentices....Algeciras....fire set on fascist homes by workers...though town occupied by fascist army...the Republicans see the regime already smashed. The Popular Front is ancient history now.

It is hard to imagine the socialist, communist and syndicalist elements that have borne the brunt of the fighting for the defence of the republic in the South continuing under the tutelage of a handful of purely bourgeois republicans." (my emphasis EG)

This "handful of bourgeois republicans" was to retain decisive control because of the policy of the leadership of all the workers organisations - anarchists, Poumist, socialist and communist. In one way or another they betrayed the heroic spontaneous reaction to the fascist uprising. They betrayed the elementary class movement of the workers, by collaborating with the rotten republican bourgeois leaders, who by this time represented nobody but themselves.

In this dirty work of "Democratic" counter revolution the leadership of the Communist Party played the principal part. They did this under the instructions of Stalin. By this time the parties of the Communist International had become agents of the foreign policy of the Russian bureaucracy. The latter was terrified that a successful socialist revolution in Spain, or in any other country of Western Europe would undermine their power and lead to their overthrow, and the restoration of workers democracy in Russia. In fact the revolution in Spain stirred the Russian workers more than any event since the usurpation of power by Stalin. In attempting to maintain their power,

through Stalin, the bureaucracy were compelled to launch the "Witchcraft trials", murder practically all the leaders of the revolution and the old Bolsheviks, murdering hundreds of thousands of the rank and file of the Communist Party. This was due partly to the repercussions of the revolution in Spain. Victory to Spanish socialism would have sounded the death knell for the Soviet bureaucracy.

In addition to which the bureaucrats were not concerned with revolutionary diplomacy, as under Lenin, but purely nationalist considerations. They wanted at that time, to placate the capitalists of Britain and France, to gain an alliance against Germany. They did not wish to upset this by a revolutionary conflagration which would have spread to France and destroy entirely the world political and social equilibrium.

In Spain the Communist Party set the pace for the betrayal of the revolution and thus the terrible defeat of the working class. But the Communist Party was not the decisive element. Far more powerful were the anarchists and the socialist party, the CNT and the UGT.

The anarchists betrayed every principle of anarchism let alone of socialism. The tenets not to support any Government, by entering the Bourgeois Government at a time when the basis of such a Government, in the real relationships of class forces had disappeared.

The Prieto right wing socialists stood for collaboration with the republican bourgeoisie, but at that moment would have carried little weight with the rank and file, had Caballero and the left wing of the socialist party stood firmly against such a course, as did Lenin and Trotsky in Russia in 1917, the situation would have changed fundamentally. The position was far more favourable objectively than in Russia after the revolution of February 1917. The workers were practically the only armed force. They endeavoured to seize industry, as the peasants endeavoured to seize the land. Thus the workers heralded the attempt at socialist revolution that they were instinctively trying to undertake.

Had Caballero and the left socialists organised committees of workers or Soviets, in the factories and districts and advocated the setting up of a workers Government, getting rid of the remnants of the capitalists and the representatives of the republicans - capitalist politicians who no longer reflected, directly at least, their class: There was nothing to stand in the way of organising a workers Government and thus a victorious working class who could then have waged a socialist struggle against Franco.

The POUMists in Catalonia dragged at the tail of the anarchists and entered the Bourgeois Government in Catalonia. Thus preparing their terrible fate at the hands of the Stalinists.

Caballero, surrendered to the pressure of the Stalinists and instead of launching the struggle for power - this is an exaggeration, it would have been only a question of brushing aside the discredited republican representatives only of themselves - by calling on the workers to set up their revolutionary juntas and organising socialist power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Stalinists would have been unable to resist. Had they done so they would have lost the overwhelming majority of their worker followers. The anarchists would have been compelled to follow this lead. The POUM (centrists standing between reformism and marxism) would have supported and the Prieto wing of the socialist party would have been isolated and incapable of resistance. A workers Government could then have begun a revolutionary socialist war against Franco and appealed to the international working class for support. Caballero and the left socialists failed to understand the opportunity and the dangers and thus inevitably prepared the way for the crushing of the revolution and then the victory of Franco.

The Daily Worker of July 27th 1936, reported a speech by the leader of the British Communist Party, Harry Pollitt:

"In the light of present events it can now be seen that a great mistake was made in not removing all the army officers opposed to the people's front."

"....the aim (of the counter-revolution) undoubtedly was to destroy the people's Spain and to safeguard the interests of the landlords, feudal families, big capitalists and monarchists, and to check any further possibility of the workers advancing."

".....The workers of the World behind the Spanish people means victory...."

Thus the futile demand that the bourgeois Republicans dismantle the bulwark of Bourgeois rule - the guardian of its domination and property rights - the Army; is repeated just when the spontaneous movement of the proletariat has demonstrated its stupidity, its lulling of the Proletariat - leaving them defenceless before the reaction. As well ask the capitalists to voluntarily donate their property to the proletariat, as was done by the Utopian Socialists as ask them to dismantle the apparatus of their rule - the State machine - armed bodies of men and their various appendages.

The actions of the Fascists were determined by the interests of the landlords, feudal families, and big capitalists, says Pollitt, and was repeated ad nauseum by the leaders of the Communist Parties of the world. But to overthrow them was precisely the task of the Socialist Revolution. To "defend property" and "order" was to defend the interests of the organisers and financiers of the Fascist counter-revolution. The words of the C.P. leaders were hopelessly in contradiction. They betrayed the workers while making anti-capitalist statements inconsistently.

## **WORKERS' MILITIA**

On July 27th 1936 Frank Pitcairn, the correspondent of the 'Daily Worker' in Barcelona, wrote: "....Among the demands already put forward by various organisations, however, are the immediate nationalisation of the entire merchant marine, and the handing over of a number of vital factories to the trade unions..."

"...The workers armed militias will remain a permanent defence corps, taking over most of the functions of the army. Large numbers of soldiers sent officially on leave to be beyond the influence of Fascist officers have already enrolled in the militia."

And again on July 29th: "...Everywhere I found calm confidence and swift progress as the workers develop their control of affairs in the defence against Fascism."

"....For example, at Targua the President of the local committee told me 'The Socialisation of all essential products has been an accomplished fact here since last Wednesday.' 'Corn, olives, wine, and all the other main agricultural produce of the area are now the property of the workers, through their co-operatives. This years crops will be entirely owned by the poor peasants. It was first necessary to carry out the reorganisation of the landowner's co-operative which, until last week, consisted of both poor and rich peasants with the latter naturally dominating policy. Now the big land-owners...have been rejected...the co-operative, which is entirely in the hands of the poor peasants, has taken over all the crops.' "

"These co-operatives were under the supreme control of the defence commi-

tee, on which the Labour Alliance, and the small bourgeois parties, are also represented..."

"...We are now working not for the rich, but for ourselves and for the workers of Barcelona and other cities of Catalonia."

"...Barcelona...there is strict control of prices and heavy fines are imposed for profiteering."

"...The Anarchists have issued instructions for the formation of flying squads to deal with looters."

These quotations in the early days of the Revolution show the situation developing in Spain - the workers wanted to make the Revolution and the peasants of Catalonia and Aragon - following their lead seized the land - going further than the Russian peasants in the early days of the Revolution - and collectivised the land.

Harry Pollitt, writing in the 'Daily Worker' of July 29th from Paris:

"....The Fascists had made their preparations well. When the signal for the revolt was given a fortnight ago only one regiment in the whole of Catalonia had refused to join."

"But the initiative and daring of the masses quickly made itself felt. Seizing what arms were available, the workers took the field and, in 36 hours, had crushed the Fascist rising in and around Barcelona."

"The workers militia stormed the barracks, captured rifles and artillery, (my emphasis) improvised primitive tanks, captured the radio centres and quickly passed from the defensive to the offensive."

"Soldiers in the rebel regiments began to desert to the side of the workers militia. Those who were captured were interned in the barracks and workers were sent to fraternise with them and explain the foul work for which their officers had tried to use them..."

Thus the class lines were clearly drawn. All it required was for the workers, under Marxist leadership, to organise their own state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and begin a revolutionary war against Franco. Yet the C.P., in obedience to the dictates of their Stalinist masters in Moscow, deliberately muddled the issues. In the 'Daily Worker' of July 27th it states:

# MILITANT

## subscribe now

The eight page MILITANT apart from giving reports of the International and British Labour Movement will provide an indispensable theoretical analysis of the developments facing the working class in the next period. We will be carrying regular feature articles; reports from the Labour and Trade Union movement and the Labour Party Young Socialists; international coverage; industrial reports and many more items. We have given timely warnings and analysis of the dangers facing the working class and the need to link the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill with that of the Housing Finance Bill and the other attacks on the working class. We will continue to do this.

Please send me a regular copy of MILITANT every week.

### RATES

| 13 issues<br>85p | 26 issues<br>£1.70 | 52 issues<br>£3.40 |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|

NAME

ADDRESS.

FOREIGN RATES  
EUROPE (Airspeeded)  
52 ISSUES £4.50  
26 ISSUES £2.25  
REST OF WORLD  
(Airspeeded)  
52 ISSUES £5.00  
26 ISSUES £2.50

"Everyone can now see that the Fascists in Spain were able to organise a military revolt not because the Government was too 'revolutionary', but precisely because it believed (like the Labour leaders) that it could 'Shape and adapt the state to its democratic purpose'."

"....If the Spanish government had driven the Fascist officers out of the armed forces, if they had dismissed the Fascist officers in the police force, if they had created a workers militia to defend the government and to enforce its decisions, there would have been no Fascist military revolt and thousands of lives would have been saved. (their emphasis) But the people of Spain had learned their lesson even if the British Labour leaders are too blind to see the meaning of the heroic struggle in Spain."

The blind leading the blind! Thus the Stalinists refused to pose the problems in class terms. They preferred to regard the Bourgeois Republican measures of the Casares Quiroga, of the Azanas and Companys' as "mistakes" rather than motivated by class interests and ideology. Thus they abandoned completely the Marxist method. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky constantly emphasised the need to abandon abstract rhetoric and to mercilessly expose the flaws in the arguments of the Bourgeois Democrats.

At a time when real power was in the hands of the working class the Socialist and Communist leaders preferred to hand back power to the discredited representatives of the Republican Bourgeoisie, while the Bourgeoisie itself had gone over overwhelmingly to the side of Franco - in that lay the tragedy of the Spanish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War.

If there was not social revolution in Spain, what is a social revolution supposed to look like? The few lawyers, doctors and M.P.'s on the side of the Republic constituted a tiny minority - the early victories over the Fascists were obtained by the workers fighting for workers objectives.

The Communist Party in Spain was the fighting vanguard of the democratic counter-revolution in Republican Spain. They drew the Anarchists and the Socialist leaders behind them. The S.P. leadership not having a worked-out perspective, were dragged behind the C.P., the right wing wholeheartedly supporting and the left wing round Caballero protestingly. But the Caballero wing were not prepared to stand firm. Had they done so events in Spain would have taken an entirely different course and a socialist victory would have been possible.

---

# MILITANT IRISH MONTHLY

The MILITANT-IRISH MONTHLY is an invaluable source of facts, reports and analysis for the British Labour movement. The question of Ireland has loomed large in the history of the British Labour Movement and never more than today. The destinies of the Irish and British working classes are indissolubly linked. This is why every reader of the British MILITANT must have the opportunity of reading the MILITANT IRISH MONTHLY.

We carry articles on the everyday life and struggles of the workers; we will analyse in detail the current situation in Ireland. We will carry important historical and theoretical articles which are indispensable to the understanding of the present problems and perspectives facing the Irish working class.

We urge every seller and subscriber to take out a bulk order or subscription to MILITANT - IRISH MONTHLY. Fill in the form below immediately.

## MILITANT - IRISH MONTHLY

32, Brickfield Drive  
Dublin 12

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

6 ISSUES. 40p

12 ISSUES. 80p \_\_\_\_\_

The P.O.U.M. was the most left organisation, parading itself as Marxist, and it followed the Anarchists in Catalonia into the Government and prepared the way for their destruction. They had jumped from a party of 1,000 - 1,500 to 30,000 in six weeks. According to some reports this rose to 60,000 members. In proportion to population they were thus stronger than the Bolsheviks were in the early days of the Russian revolution. Moreover, the situation in Spain was far more revolutionary.

The workers militia remained organised as a workers' army. But the C.P. of Spain had had its orders. On August 5th 1936, a little more than a fortnight after the attempted counter-revolution and the answering movement, it issued the following declaration:

"The control committee of the Communist Party of Spain...the Spanish people, in their struggle against the rebellion, are not striving for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat BUT KNOW ONLY ONE AIM: The defence of the Republican order while respecting property. (my emphasis)"

"....This work...has the co-operation...of such conservative parties as the Basque Nationalist Party, whose members are Catholics. This fact gives lie to the declaration made by General Franco on the 'Marxist Danger' in Spain, and demonstrates the duty imposed on all order loving people, without exception, to take sides with the defenders of order, in Spain." (my emphasis) Reported in the Manchester Guardian of August 6th, the traditional Liberal paper in Britain.

What an inspiring and morale building appeal to the Spanish masses: they should take no action against the property of the millionaire landowners and industrialists, who had prompted and financed the movement of the Fascists and the insurrection of the army Generals. This was even to the right of the position of the left Republicans. Jose Giral, the Prime Minister in Madrid, manoeuvring under the pressure of the workers and fearful that they would seize the banks, is reported without comment in the 'Daily Worker' of August 8th:

"Explaining the measures for the control of industry and the banks Senor Giral said 'It is necessary to undermine the economic basis of Fascism. Big banks and big industry have been the pay-masters of Fascism, supplying funds with which the Fascist Generals have been able to carry out a criminal attack on our people. That is why the most vigilant control is now necessary.'"

What an annihilating argument for the expropriation of the landowners, bankers and capitalists! What did the 'control' amount to? It merely preserved the basis of capitalism till better times came or the victory of Franco. It was not for this that the workers so self sacrificingly and heroically shed their blood.

Take a few random despatches from the liberal paper the Guardian dealing with the measures taken by the Spanish workers. On the 23rd July 1936 the Guardian reports from Madrid:

"A committee of syndicalist organisations today took over the control of all railway services in Madrid, dismissed the director, sub-directors, and officials of the Northern Railway Company, and replaced them by proved Republicans."

Then a despatch from Barcelona on 27th August 1936: "A government decree issued this week-end makes effective a 40 hour week and a 15% increase of wages for industrial workers earning less than 600 pesetas a month. P.S.U.C. (United Socialist and Communist Party of Catalonia) and Anarchist proposals...a 36 hour week. 10% increases in wages below 500 pesetas a month. A 25% decrease in rents. Payment for strike days, indemnity for

the unemployed. Control of production by workers. A clean-up of various army sections. The continuance of the popular militias. A summary court-martial of the military chiefs of the present insurrection."

This was - in words - accepted by the Catalan President Companys as he manoeuvred desperately and powerlessly for a time in the hope that the situation would improve.

In the same issue it is reported by foreigners fleeing from Barcelona: "The travellers said that the strike was the workers counter-stroke to the Fascists....Next day there were no servants in the hotel and little food."

In the Guardian of 29th July 1936 there is an interview with a French garage proprietor in Barcelona who had fled to Toulouse:

"...No-one in Barcelona obeys the government any longer, or, rather what is left of the government. Power has passed into the hands of workers' groups, who are often guided by their political and social passions. The people obey the leaders of these various groupings, many of which are Anarchist and Communist. It is rather curious to find that the Mairie of Port Bou is the only one left that still functions normally under the control of the civil guard. Everywhere else local committees have been set up in other buildings and the Mairies have been abandoned. In the countryside the peasants continue to work in the fields and they are paid for poultry, cattle and other provisions in bonds. Most of these bonds are signed by the Communist Party or the United Trotskyist Workers' Party (In reality the P.O.U.M. composed of ex-Trotskyists and Catalan Nationalist former Communist Party members - E.G.) ....The banks are open and they receive signed cheques but do not pay them...."

And then again on August 3rd and 4th from Barcelona:

"The public services are running efficiently under the direction of syndicalists, who are now controlling all transport including the Catalan railways and certain important industries."

And again on the 4th August 1936:

"All public services such as water, gas, electricity, tramways and railways, are now administered by the workers. The former managers and technical experts are, however, retained and consulted where necessary. But whereas the salaries of the workers have been raised by 30%, those of the technical services are strictly limited to 1,500 pesetas a month."

Sometimes the essence of an event can be discerned in trifling things, that are symptomatic of deeper processes. Thus the Daily Worker of August 7th 1936 reports about the same time as the Spanish central committee of the Communist Party is babbling about order and the defence of democracy and property.

"Towns held by Spanish government troops are having the street names changed. Names which have any connection with Capitalism are being taken down. Proletariat 'liberty' and Karl Marx streets replace them."

This report from the Stalinist press itself shows the real wishes and aspirations of the armed working class at the time. They were trying to impose a revolutionary policy on the leadership which was too blind or cowardly - or in the case of the C.P. leadership and that of the right-wing socialists too sceptical, cynical and treacherous to understand the realities of the situation. In the same issue of the Daily Worker their correspondent from Madrid reports:

"....The aircraft factory at Cuatro Vientos is working directly under

control of a workers committee, composed of representatives of workers of all branches..."

"....Similarly the majority of factories, railways, tramways and power-plants are working under the control of factory committees..."

"....All banking operations too are under the strict control of committees composed of representatives of the clerks union, thus ensuring the impossibility of wealthy Fascists putting across any operations harmful to the Republican (?) cause."

These few quotations and the material in the former pages can give only a pale reflection of the magnificence of the revolution - of the workers revolution - let us call it by its right name - the socialist revolution - which was unfolding in Spain. The workers were trying to break with capitalism, in small things and on the question of power. The leadership of their organisations, and through them, the organisations themselves, blocked their path. There was no party, or faction in the parties, prepared to make a stand, as did the Bolsheviks in Russia, or Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht in Germany.

The Bolsheviks, from a small minority, became the majority of the Russian Revolution and led the workers to victory. In Spain in an exceptionally favourable situation, more favourable than in Russia before the October 1917 Revolution, there was no party or leadership capable of making a correct estimate of the situation, drawing the necessary conclusions, and leading the workers firmly to take power. All that was necessary in the situation was to explain to the workers the real relationship of forces, the necessary and vital steps and to show them how their leaders and organisations stood in the way.

Power was in the hands of the workers, but it was not centralised or organised. Committees, Juntas or Soviets, the name does not matter, should have been organised in every factory and district, elected by the workers, housewives and all sections of the working population, including the peasants and of course the workers militias. These in turn should have been linked by delegates to form area, regional and an all National Committee. This could have formed the framework of a new Regime pushing aside the contemptible and powerless Government and establishing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

## REVOLUTIONARIES ISOLATED

The mood and actions of the working class would have gained an overwhelming response. Outside Spain, day by day, Leon Trotsky and the Trotskyists, made the correct analysis but at that time in Spain they had neither the authority nor the organisation to influence events. The overwhelming majority of the active militants, the S.P., the C.P., the P.O.U.M., and the anarchist militants unfortunately had no access to the material issued by the Trotskyists, and thus could not react to it. That was the tragedy of the Spanish revolution, which doomed it to defeat and prepared the way for the victory of Franco in the Civil War.

The events of the civil war can only be given in a sketchy form and even a synopsis here. If necessary we will return to this theme with the necessary documentation. However, Felix Morrow has written a Marxist classic "Revolution and Counter Revolution in Spain" dealing with the first 18 months (?) which is an invaluable record of the facts. We hope that it will become available in Spanish for the benefit of the Y.S. and Socialist Party comrades.

Jose Giral, as Prime Minister of a cabinet composed exclusively of Left Republicans, became more and more incompatible with the real relationship of

forces. Consequently Giral resigned on September 14th and handed over to Caballero, who formed a government consisting of Socialists - left and right - communists, Left Republicans and even right Republicans. Thus instead of dismantling the bourgeois state, Caballero and the Left Socialists collaborated with the Stalinists in shoring it up with the 'correct' parliamentary forms.

They represented neither the decisive sections of the bourgeoisie nor even a sizeable section of the proletariat. They hung in limbo, without even the "normal" basis of a bourgeois state - control of the armed forces. The workers militias were under the control of the workers organisations and looked to them for guidance and leadership.

Instead of encouraging the workers in their endeavours to take control, Caballero promised a better world...After the war! In the Cortes he announced. "...It is important to state at once that the structure of the country will be changed after our victory and that the first article of the constitution according to which Spain is a republic of the toiling masses can at last be realised...." (Page 1260, International Press Correspondence, 19th September 1936).



But the whole essence of a civil war is that the masses cannot wait! A change in the social structure has to be carried out immediately if it is to have an effect on the workers, and especially the peasants. They have been deceived so many times, that they become sceptical and indifferent to promises. Statements of social changes especially when couched in such vague, indefinite phrases can have no appeal, especially to peasants.

They want deeds not words in a situation where words are punctuated by bullets. Lenin explained long ago that "An ounce of experience is worth ten of theory", especially where promises are concerned. If the masses are to make great sacrifices of blood and suffering it must be for a worthwhile aim - and not that of the discredited bourgeois "republic" which had prepared the way for the Fascist counter-revolution.

Gilding the "republic" as was done by Caballero can carry no conviction to the peasants. They think in terms of the land. That is the reality to them. When propaganda by loudspeakers to the rebel army was conducted in the trenches, the reply of the conscripted peasants in Franco's army to appeals to come over to the republic was "what has the republic ever done for us?" To them it was a struggle between generals. They didn't want to fight but they could see no fundamental difference between the two sides. Why risk reprisals to their families and risk their own lives by coming over? Consequently they fought for their own enslavement as well as that of the workers and peasants of all Spain.



**THE MURDERERS ARRIVE**

Just to make sure that there were to be no real social changes the general secretary of the "Communist" party Jose Diaz wrote in the same issue....."In order to alarm international opinion (whose opinion, that of the capitalists, E.G.) its enemies have asserted that it is a socialist-communist government; In reality it is nothing more nor less than the continuation of the republican and democratic ministries." This is for once correct, and we have seen the record of these ministries! "Where the peasants en masse have taken up the armed struggle against the rebels and are now organising a guerrilla struggle at the rear of the reactionary bandits..."

Hunting for examples of that mythical creature under modern conditions the "revolutionary bourgeoisie" the communist party writer continues...."The considerable success of the party of Martinez Barrie at the elections (of February 1936) cannot be explained otherwise than by the anti-fascist sentiments of part of the bourgeoisie....(after the July fascist insurrection)" Jose Hiral, Francisco Barnes, Casares Quiroga (his role is sufficiently dealt with in his threats to give instructions to shoot anyone arming the workers), Enrico Kames and Manuel Blasque Garon - Industrialists and landowners who form part of the ministry of Jose Hiral..."...In fact they represented not their class but themselves as individuals - within the republican camp desperately manouvering against the socialist revolution.

Apart from the fact that in the early days and hours of the fascist uprising, before they had lost control of events, the Liberal government tried to compromise with the Franco gangsters. The article, continues with grisly and unconscious humour: "...Had the development of events been different it

is possible that some of these people would have sought for a compromise with reaction...."

The article continues..."...There can be no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the bourgeoisie sympathise with the insurgents, and support them, but there are groups of the bourgeoisie, especially among the national minorities...therefore these groups must not be left out of account in the anti-fascist camp....A wide social basis at a moment of such sharp struggle is one of the factors guaranteeing the success of the revolution...the Spanish anti-fascist people's front, as a specific form of the unification of various classes in face of the fascist danger (my emphasis) ....At the same time the peculiarity of the Spanish people's front...the relatively slow pace at which the masses of the peasantry are being drawn into the armed struggle..."

To "add" fire to petrol hardly increases one's forces. To have the support of the remnant of the bourgeoisie was, as events were to demonstrate to weaken and undermine, not strengthen the struggle against Franco. Action expropriating the landowners and capitalists would have strengthened the workers' camp a million times more. But in reality the Stalinists, at the instructions of Moscow, were desperately trying to restore the bourgeois republican regime. In Catalonia, and Spain, as the party that stood for "law" "order" "the defence of private property" they became the party of the middle class in the towns and the rich peasants in the countryside. At that time two thirds of the membership were composed of shopkeepers, foremen, small businessmen, rich peasants, top levels of the technicians, etc. Only one third was composed of workers - mostly the most backward section of the working class.

## **WORKERS' OR CAPITALIST ARMY ?**

The Stalinists as defenders of the "revolutionary bourgeoisie" were trying to restore the situation in republican Spain as it existed before the revolution. This required counter revolution - bloody and vile - within the republican camp.

As early as October 1936 they prevailed on Caballero to begin the process of transforming the militia into a "regular army". Now it is clear that in a civil war centralised command is necessary. But the whole point of an army in modern society is in whose interests it is organised, what class basis it possesses, what is its motivation, which class does the general staff and the officers come from, whose interests do they represent, what class basis does the army fulfil? No mythical appeals to anti-fascist unity can avoid the class issues while class society remains.

Trotsky and the Bolsheviks built an army also from scratch. But it was the army of the workers in power. They used tens of thousands of the officers of the Tsarist army, but they were under the strict control of workers commissars loyal to the workers' state and to the ideals of the socialist revolution.

If a centralised army is to be built it can only be the tool of a workers or capitalist state - it cannot be a non-class army - a mythical class neutrality is impossible. Consequently, afraid or incapable of consummating the socialist revolution, Caballero and the other leaders assisted in carrying through the organisation of a capitalist army. This again was to have disastrous consequences for the civil war.

As already shown the overwhelming majority of the officers and generals went over to the fascists, far more apparently than even in Russia. In a purely military struggle they would clearly have the advantage. But war, and even to a magnified extent civil war is the continuation of politics by

forcible means. In war, says Napoleon, the moral is to the physical as 4 is to 1.

By creating an army not on the model of the Red Army of 1918-20 but of a capitalist army, the whole basis of the workers struggle was undermined. Systematically in Barcelona and Madrid the Stalinists toiled to recreate the bourgeois state. The first great successes had all been achieved by the methods of social revolution. The militias in the first rush conquered Aragon. The land was seized in Catalonia and Aragon. Advancing further than the Russian revolution in its early days in response to generations of anarchist propaganda the land was collectivised by the peasants themselves. The militia stood at the gates of Huesca, Teruel and Saragossa..

But the central government starved this front of arms and supplies for fear of the social revolutionary consequences that victory on this front would mean. Caballero allowed himself to be blackmailed by the C.P. under threat that the Russians would cease to supply arms, the bulk of which were being sent to the Madrid front, where the C.P. played an important role.

It was the growing conflict between the aspirations of the workers and the gradual return to bourgeois "normality" which precipitated the crisis which came to be known as the "May days of 1937".

Every revolution has seen similar movements of the workers when they felt the revolution being betrayed. The June days of France in Paris in 1848, the July days in Russia of 1917 and the January days in Germany in 1919. The masses feel power slipping out of their hands. They rise convulsively in protest against the "sell out" to the bourgeoisie in an elemental movement.

## **POWER IN WORKERS' HANDS**

The immediate cause of the uprising of the working class in Barcelona and Catalonia was the attempt of the Stalinists to seize control of the telephone exchange for the Catalan government. This had been under the control of the workers in the C.N.T. since the first days of the revolution, and represented an element of workers control.

The Stalinists in the Generalidad, the autonomous Catalanian government, sent some tanks and troops to seize control of the exchange. The workers replied with a general strike. Barricades appeared in Barcelona and other Catalanian towns. The government was powerless. An attempt to send assault guards from Valencia and to send the international brigade to put down the movement of the workers collapsed because of the refusal of the troops to be moved to take action against the workers.

Once again, power was in the hands of the workers! There were no troops in Barcelona or elsewhere on which the government could rely to put down the movement.

Here the C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M. came to the rescue of the revived Bourgeois state. Arguing that it was impossible to start a Civil War within a Civil War these "Marxists" appealed to the workers to return to work. Some way of ending the conflict would be found by agreement between the workers and the Government. For four days the workers controlled the streets. HAD THE P.O.U.M. ISSUED THE CALL TO TAKE POWER THERE WAS NO FORCE TO STOP THEM! The anarchists and the P.O.U.M., prevailed on the workers to "Go back to work." The crisis was over! The opportunity to transform the situation was lost.

Had the P.O.U.M. taken power they could have offered a united front against Franco to the Government in Madrid. The Government had no troops on which it could rely. Very rapidly the masses in Madrid, Valencia and at the fronts would have rallied to the banner of socialism in Barcelona. The power of the Madrid Government would have crumbled and disappeared.

The P.O.U.M. failed to act. They had entered the Catalonian Bourgeois Government with the Anarchists and hoped for miracles. In words they were against class collaboration, in deeds they collaborated with the shadow of the capitalist class.



**WOMEN  
TRAIN  
FOR THE  
FRONT**

## **P.O.U.M VACILLATES**

Within six weeks they received the reward for their cowardice and lack of perspective. In a revolution the masses learn fast, but these "leaders" had learned nothing. The Stalinists seized the opportunity provided by the fact that the masses had been reduced to passivity and despair. Using the pretext that the P.O.U.M. were involved in a plot with Franco they were declared illegal. Nin and other leaders were murdered by G.P.U. agents in Spain. The Party disappeared from the scene.

Caballero had refused to agree to the suppression of the P.O.U.M. Consequently he had to be removed. The C.P. hatched a plot with Prieto and the right wing socialists and with the bourgeois Republicans in the cabinet. Caballero was replaced by Negrin, who was more pliant in the hands of the Stalinists. Passionaria hailed this as the "Government of Victory!" There were some military victories. Very few! But by transforming the struggle into a purely military one the seeds for defeat had been sown. The bourgeois officers who had the military training were not reliable.

After the dissolution of the militias, Malaga and the Basque country were betrayed by a section of the staff into the hands of the Fascists.

But in any event, as a purely military struggle the war could not be won! The general excuses, if they deal with the subject at all, to explain the defeat by the reformists and Stalinists, is foreign intervention and the Moors! Hitler and Mussolini supplied troops, 100,000 Italians and 20,000 to 60,000

Germans, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Moors were in Franco's Army.

But in the Russian Revolution, too, there was intervention from foreign troops. Twenty-one armies, of all the Great Powers, intervened. Russia was blockaded. In the early stages of the Civil War only one province with Petrograd and Leningrad remained in the hands of the Bolsheviks. The rest of Russia was in the hands of the White Guard and the armies of intervention.

The Bolsheviks won not because of superior military arms, or skills but because they waged the civil war as a social struggle. Land to the peasants, freedom for the oppressed nationalities, factories to the workers and Proletarian Internationalism was the method of the Bolsheviks. Consequently, every Russian Army sent against the Bolsheviks and Russian Workers and Peasantry, and their power, mutinied and had to be withdrawn. Behind the capitalist and Imperialist lines the peasants and workers sabotaged the struggle. They supplied the Red Army with invaluable information about their enemies. They organised Guerrilla war. The White Guard Armies, feeling the hostility of the people, became demoralised. Tens of thousands conscripted, deserted to the Reds. The Russian workers were victorious in the Civil War.

In China Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese C.P., waging a semi-revolutionary war, gained victory. The Civil War started with an overwhelming majority of Chiang Kai-Shek forces, militarily and numerically. They were supplied with the most modern equipment in tanks, planes and guns, by American Imperialism. The greater part of China was in their hands. But giving the land to the peasants, reserving a piece of land to the soldiers of Chiang's Armies, in the villages from where they came, won over the troops. By hundreds of thousands; and by whole divisions, they deserted to the Red Army. Waging a social war - a semi-revolutionary war - resulted in military victories too, because of the high morale of the troops, from the peasant officers to the smallest corporal and private, that is the way - though lacking sophisticated material - which was brought over by the soldiers deserting to their side - though the military odds seemed to be overwhelmingly against them in territory, numbers and material, they were victorious.

When the Spanish Civil War is examined the opposite process is to be seen. The magnificent initiative of the workers, gains dazzling victories of an unarmed working class in two-thirds of Spain. The fleet comes over to the side of the workers. Part of the Air Force and Artillery.

But the revolution is not consummated. Inch by inch the workers are blasted back. The Democratic counter-revolution in the rear undermined the struggle at the front. The land in Catalonia and Aragon is repossessed by the landlords. The factories are gradually re-gained by the capitalists. The Bourgeois state and Bourgeois army are restored. Power is in the hands of "Democratic Capitalism."

What are the consequences? The Moors were Franco's crack troops. Why did they fight for enslavement for themselves and their Spanish brothers, the workers and peasants? Abo El Krim, who led the struggle for Moorish independence from Spain and France, was in exile in an island in the Mediterranean. He offered the Republican Government to come to Spain and appeal to the Moors to come over to the side of the Republic. All he asked in return was autonomy for Morocco. But to give autonomy to Morocco would offend the "democracies" of Britain and France by undermining their Empires in Africa. Moreover, was not the Popular Front Government pledged to maintain all the Spanish Land? Not waging the war by revolutionary means the offer was rejected. Throughout the conflict the Moors remained the fiercest and best troops. The crowning irony of this particular fact is that later, fearful of the collapse of his regime were he to wage a Colonial War, Franco conceded - not autonomy - but independence! Thus the Fascists gave at the first risk what the miserable Popular Front Government was not prepared to concede when it was fighting for its life!

It is true that Mussolini and Hitler supplied enormous quantities of material and also troops to Franco. But these troops were Italian peasants and workers, German peasants and workers. They could be reached - they could only be reached by an International Socialist appeal as with the Bolsheviks in Russia. But in spite of all, foreign troops and Moors were auxiliaries. The main body of Franco's troops were Spaniards, mainly peasants conscripted into Franco's army. They could only be won over by showing the fundamental social differences between the armies. Land to the peasants, factories to the workers, freedom for the oppressed nationalities in Spain and in Africa - that was the only programme for victory. The programme of transforming the power back to the landlords and capitalists could have no effect on the troops in Franco's army. Militarily superior in officers, tanks, on this level all the advantages were on the side of Franco. Waging the struggle as a "military war" - not a social war waged by arms - guaranteed defeat. "Popular Front" France and "Democratic" Britain starved "Republican" Spain of arms with the hypocritical farce of "non-intervention." Stalinist Russia participated in this farce. Only after precious months had been lost did they supply arms, and then only on condition of halting the social revolution.

The policies of the workers parties in the revolution and civil war guaranteed defeat. But let us assume for a moment that by some fantastic miracle military if not social victory could have been obtained. What then? Power had been handed back to the capitalists and landlords. The remnants of the old officer caste and middle class had taken over the officers jobs in the reconstructed bourgeois army. The country was ruined and had been laid waste in the terrible civil war.

The repression of the initiative of the workers and their nascent control of the factories had demoralised and thwarted the ideals of the working class. The generals, placed in full command of the renewed army, decided everything. Towards the end of the struggle it was apparent that victory was far away.

The uncontrolled army command, of the refurbished regular army, seized power to try and propose a compromise with Franco!. General Casado and General Miaja - Miaja with a Communist Party membership card in his pocket - established a military dictatorship! As a reward for being the fighting vanguard of democratic counter-revolution, within the revolution, the "Communist" Party was made illegal and forced underground. There were now two dictatorships in Spain - on both sides of the trenches!

Even had "Republican" Spain won the civil war there would have been a military police state in Spain! This was the final condemnation of the policies of all the workers organisations.

Spain, after more than three decades of dictatorship is moving once again towards revolution. The C.P. leaders, having learned nothing, play the same perfidious role.

It is the task of the Spanish Young Socialists to carry the lessons of the civil war to the working class, and of course to the rank and file fighters of the Communist Party. Internationally and nationally the perspective is favourable. Anarchism is discredited in its former "Last Latin hide-out" and is very weak. The Socialist Party and the Communist Party are the two real forces within the working class. The CP rank and file will respond to a bold lead from the S.P. and the Y.S. if it is based on the ideas of Marxism.

Victory of the Socialist revolution in Spain can transform the international situation. The only road for the Spanish Workers to ensure the success of the revolution is to learn the lessons of the Spanish revolution of 1931-1937 and of the civil war. Without this understanding they would be doomed to make similar mistakes and suffer the fate of their fathers and grandfathers.



# Socialist Literature

|                                                                    |        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| WAGES, PRICE AND PROFIT. MARX                                      | 10p    |
| WAGE LABOUR AND CAPITAL. MARX                                      | 10p    |
| WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING?. TROTSKY                                   | 37p    |
| THE HOUSING QUESTION. ENGELS                                       | 15p    |
| SELECTED WORKS. MARX & ENGELS                                      | £1.50  |
| THE STATE AND REVOLUTION. LENIN                                    | 15p    |
| 'LEFT WING' COMMUNISM – AN INFANTILE DISORDER. LENIN               | 10p    |
| ON LITERATURE AND ART. LENIN                                       | 63p    |
| LESSONS OF SPAIN. TROTSKY                                          | 20p    |
| REVOLUTION BETRAYED. TROTSKY                                       | £1.25p |
| IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM. TROTSKY                                     | £1     |
| FASCISM – WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO FIGHT IT. TROTSKY                  | 20p    |
| GENERAL STRIKE 1926. TROTSKY                                       | 20p    |
| FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF MARXISM. PLEKHANOV                         | £1.25  |
| LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY. CONNOLLY                                  | 25p    |
| LABOUR, NATIONALITY AND RELIGION. CONNOLLY                         | 15p    |
| THE IRON HEEL. JACK LONDON                                         | £1.25p |
| THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS. ROBERT TRESSELL              | 60p    |
| 1905, TROTSKY                                                      | 75p    |
| SOCIALIST SONG BOOK                                                | 12p    |
| BUREAUCRATISM OR WORKERS POWER?. SILVERMAN & GRANT                 | 15p    |
| CZECHOSLOVAKIA '68 (includes 2,000 Words statement). KARALASINGHAM | 12p    |
| LENIN & TROTSKY – WHAT THEY REALLY STOOD FOR. A WOODS & E GRANT    | 75p    |
| ALEXANDER SOLYHENITSYN, SOLDIER, PRISONER WRITER, R WEERAKOON      | 15p    |
| ON RELIGION. MARX & ENGELS                                         | £1.00  |
| THE CLASS, THE PARTY AND THE LEADERSHIP. TROTSKY                   | 5p     |
| LENIN by TROTSKY                                                   | 8p     |
| CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS IN ENGLAND. ENGELS                 | 50p    |

SEND CASH WITH ORDER AND PLEASE ADD 10% FOR POSTAGE

WRITE FOR COMPLETE BOOK LIST

ORDER FROM **WORLD BOOKS**

375 Cambridge Heath Road London E2 9RA 01-739 7176