

Throughout the World of Labor

The Fall Of Primo De Rivera and its Consequences

The fall of Primo de Rivera surprised almost no one. It surprised only Primo de Rivera himself... and the leading Spanish Communists. The former stated, two weeks before his collapse, that he would relinquish power of his own accord in six months; the latter, like an echo, were writing that Primo would be with us for a long time.

Primo did not yield up power of his own accord. Neither was he driven out by a revolutionary movement. His downfall was due to one of those secret revolts which threaten to, break out not only against a government, but also against the class which maintains it. The class—the bourgeoisie, the monarchy the army—wish to ward off the immediate danger, the discontent and the growing revolution, by driving Primo out of power and promising a return to the constitutional form of government. In fact, a large-scale conspiracy was organized, which, in breaking forth could have overthrown not only the dictatorship, but even the monarchy, and which, under the existing circumstances, could have exceeded the desires and intention of the organizers themselves.

It can be said with certainty that the discontent against Primo was widespread. The proletariat showed their discontent through the powerful strikes of 1927-28-29 in Austria, Catalogne, Seville, etc., strikes of an almost spontaneous character, let loose through economic causes, and which rapidly assumed a political character, not through the almost non-existent efforts of the official communist movement, but through the intervention of the dictatorship, on the side of the bosses, against the proletariat and through the rapid development of the latter.

(The leading Spanish Communists have deceived the International in pretending that these strikes were instigated and directed by themselves. Unfortunately this was not so.)

Bourgeoisie Desert Primo

*The discontent of the petty-bourgeoisie, of the intellectuals, and of a section of the army manifested itself in the form of conspiracies, (six, up to the one which was being recently prepared) and in the student movements. Primo was already left with the support of only a section of the big financial and industrial bourgeoisie whom he had succeeded in reassuring through the establishment of national monopolies at the expense of foreign finance capital, and through extreme political protection. But he ended up by losing the support of the big bourgeoisie as well because of the fall in the value of the Peseta.

The pressure of international finance was in fact one of the chief causes, a fact which can easily be explained, it having given rise to the ultra-nationalist political economy of Primo. This, however, was not the sole cause. Instead of correcting this entire political economy, financial and social, and of achieving parity, the dictatorship believed that it could sustain the Peseta by means of simple manipulations in the world market. It obtained a credit of 18 million pounds from a group of British and American financiers, which made possible only a temporary halt in the decline of the Spanish standard. The decline proceeded in a fatalistic manner, resulting first in a defection of the Minister of Finance and finally in the collapse of the entire government.

Financial Crisis in Spain

The economic and political situation which Primo is leaving as a heritage to his successors, is extremely dangerous. If the best-known former political leaders—Cambo, the younger Maura, Sanchez Guerra, etc.—definitely refuse to aid Berenguer, it is because of the seriousness of the situation. Above all stands the financial question. In 1923, the year of Primo's Coup-d'Etat, the Spanish public debt, according to the official figures themselves, was 8,531 million Pesetas, the total indebtedness of the treasury approaching 5,000 million. At the end of 1929 these figures had risen to 19,635 million pesetas (an increase of 11 million in six years and four months of the dictatorship!)

Naturally, the political situation is also extremely serious. In 1923, Primo destroyed

all the government parties. Those could no longer offer the least resistance, being discredited in the eyes of the people.

But Primo set up nothing in their place. The Patriotic Union was an artificially created party, an empty shell in the eyes of the public owing its existence solely to official support. This group, together with the Advisory Assembly and everything created by the dictatorship of Primo, were doomed to perish. The proof of this lies in the fact that the king appealed and continued to appeal to the former leaders of the traditional parties, through Berenguer, that they reorganize their parties and prepare for distorted elections, following the vicious methods of former years. All this as though nothing had happened!

Of course the Spanish proletariat did not look at things in the same light. For them the former parties were permanently discredited. They did not await, they did not desire their return—a return to the status of 1923. Not a praetorian guard, but neither the former regime, and above all not a monarchy. Primo had engineered his coup-d'Etat in 1923 in order to save the monarchy.

The Growing Republican Movement

It is also in order to save it that his rule has just been liquidated and that the former politicians are preparing to govern anew. Will they succeed in saving the crown? We think not. A wider and wider republican movement is taking form in Spain. The very first acts of Berenguer have been to arrest several of the republican leaders in Valencia, Barcelona, etc. The demonstrations of the students and workers against the dictatorship revolved not only around the slogan of "Down with Primo", but "Down with the Monarchy". The republican movement cannot but grow. The important problems left over by Primo and which cannot be solved by his successors will serve to aggravate the crisis of the monarchist regime. We are at the threshold of political struggles of the greatest interest.

But we Communists, in this situation, which, by the action of material forces assume an increasingly revolutionary character, must act with energy and facility. The anti-monarchist movement will be led in its first stages by the petty-bourgeoisie, by the republican party and by the socialists.

The Spanish proletariat; whose living conditions are extremely wretched, and whose hatred of the entire system has matured during the last few years of dictatorial oppression are getting ready for participation in the struggle.

The Need of a Communist Party

But in face of the socialists who are preparing to manoeuvre, and of the anarcho-syndicalists who will attempt to reassume the leadership of the revolutionary trade unions, what is needed now is a strong Communist Party, disciplined, supple, knowing how to lead the proletariat in the coming struggles towards its emancipation. Will the actual Communist Party attain its historic mission? This is the serious problem for the entire International. Today, once again, the leaders of the Spanish Communists, with the support of the Stalin clique which steers the Comintern, readily devote themselves to the miserable task of systematically hounding the best militant Communists. Under any circumstances this attitude would be incorrect; at present it is an anti-Communist crime. We Opposition Communists will know our duty. But if the Stalinist bureaucrats attempt to hinder us, they will be responsible before the international proletariat.

Paris, February 7, 1930.

—GORKIN

German Unemployed Defy Tyrannous Laws

BERLIN—(FP)—Depression has laid its heavy hand on Germany's Manhattan. Nearly 400,000 jobless pace the cold streets; old men and women peddle newspapers or matches; the free soup stations are crowded with the destitute.

Everywhere in Germany, whose total unemployed exceeds 3,500,000, the jobless are forming organizations of protest. Demonstrations have occurred in Wurms, Erfurt

and Hamburg in defiance of the severe anti-demonstration laws recently passed by the government. These laws aim to cripple the growing Communist movement.

Police frequently shoot into crowds of marching out-of-workers. Many of the unfortunates have been killed or wounded.

But the protests continue despite the oppressive laws. "We have only our lives to lose," commented one of the jobless. "And under the present regime our lives are worthless anyhow."

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German Unemployed and the First of February

For weeks and weeks the German party has proclaimed through its 35 publications that on the first of February millions of unemployed would parade throughout Germany. The factory workers would give proof of their solidarity. Braving the ban of Zoergel and of Severing, the working class would capture the streets.

The first of February was to have marked the beginning of great mass battles. In the Leningrad Pravda appeared:

"In no country are the rise of the revolutionary wave and the collapse of capitalist stabilization as evident as in Germany. The Communist Party of Germany is, next in order after that of the Soviet Union, the most bolshevik party. That is why it is not to be wondered at that it is in Germany that one can see the advance of the approaching European revolution."

"The barricade fights in Hamburg, the defiance of the ban against demonstrations in German cities, the parades of the armies of the unemployed are, under the existing circumstances, the expression of the growing revolutionary tendencies of the masses. The events of the last few days prove that a revolutionary situation approaches at full speed in Germany."

In proportion as the leadership of the Party becomes intoxicated with its own prophecies and bombast, the social democracy becomes increasingly arrogant. The social democratic press, energetically supported by the democratic press, agitates against the C. P. G. and spreads the most fantastic lies. The closer did the 1st of February approach, the clearer did it become that the social democracy hoped, through a sweeping provocation, to definitely strike down the Party and drive it into illegality. The agitation of the social-democracy was complemented by the slander of the Brandler press, which branded the would-be plans of the Party leadership as putchist.

Wherein Lies the Defeat of the 1st of February

The leadership and the Party press evidently speak only of a "victory". Thus, the Rote Fahne of the 2nd of February writes: "The Communist party achieved its desired end on the first of February; the solid advance of marching proletarian regiments crushed Grzesinski's ban against demonstrations."

The social democracy and the bourgeois press are jubilant: the "revolutionary plans" miscarried. The social democracy and the bourgeoisie know quite well that the First of February was not the "day of the revolution" on the calendar of Thaelmann's adventures. But they also know that on the 1st of February the C. P. G. suffered a serious defeat. For the actual task which they had set themselves was far from accomplished. Only a few thousand of the 350,000 unemployed in Berlin heeded the Party's call. None of the Berlin factories in which the Party obtained so many votes, as was the case last year, when it had such great success, participated in the solidarity strike. The Party leadership did not even call upon the factories to go out on strike in solidarity with the unemployed, for it knew that this appeal would be useless.

In Red Berlin, where the C. P. G. mustered as many votes as the socialist party in the communal elections of Nov. 17, 1929 the call of the Party went to nought, and this despite the growing bitterness of the masses, and despite the increasing contempt of the Berlin proletariat for the leadership of the socialist party.

Why Was the Defeat Inevitable? 47

The C. P. G. is a mass party which represents 3 million workers, and this despite the political adventurism of its leadership, despite the unfitness of Thaelmann, Neumann, Remmele, etc.

But the masses, although voting for the party, whether in the general elections or in the elections of the factory councils, do not at all thereby show that they have decided to carry through the proletarian revolution. They simply show that they are disassociating themselves from the counter-revolutionary policy of the Social-Democratic Party—the enemy of their class. Unfortunately this is not how the Rote Fahne puts it:

"In the factories, among the unemployed on the streets, in the country and on the farms, everywhere, the willingness to abolish the system which brings nothing but hunger and misery for the masses, is growing among the workers, the willingness to put an end to a system which has proven its inability to guarantee to the working people an existence at least worthy of a human being!"

The masses who vote for the party, even those who follow its actions, are not yet that far advanced. The Party's appeal for the first of February was forcibly extinguished without achieving its aim, because it did not appeal to the masses with immediate concrete demands affecting every unemployed worker, but all it could do was to get itself drunk with vague political phrases which could not represent to non-party workers the goal to be sought after today, and tomorrow.

Berlin, February 2, 1930.

—KURT LANDAU

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LaVerite and the Militant

"There was no dearth of prophets who predicted the doom of La Verite even before it appeared. Several profound sages explained their desertion by saying that conditions were not suitable for the formation of a Communist Party in general. Nevertheless La Verite not only grows and gathers strength, but now has acquired a fighting ally as precious as La Lutte de Classes. La Verite itself assumes a clearer and more distinct form. One cannot but agree with our Chinese comrade N. who recently wrote from Shanghai that La Verite of Paris and The Militant of New York are the best publications of the International Opposition"

Excerpt from "A New Step Forward" by L. D. Trotsky, Constantinople, January 22, 1930.

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ACTORS EQUITY DEPRECATES COMPANY UNION PLAN

HOLLYWOOD, Calif.—(FP)—Company unionism is sneaking into Hollywood as a backfire against Actors Equity Assn., the theatre and movie union. Using the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the movie magnates are compelling screen people to swear away their right to strike in return for a dubious agreement.

Among concessions made to the actors as a result of the Equity strike last summer, and written into the company union agreement, are reasonable notice of dismissal (the company to determine what is reasonable) and overtime pay at regular rates. Actors are to be permitted to rest 12 hours between calls, and eight hours is to constitute a day's work for day workers.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.—For posting a sign calling for work or wages, Angelo Cappello was arrested at the Broadway Auditorium and held for \$500 bail. The maximum penalty, under an ancient city ordinance, is one year in jail.

Two workers were arrested at an open air protest demonstration held by the Council of the Unemployed. Bail was set at \$2,000.

ST. LOUIS JOBLESS SWAMP CHARITIES

ST. LOUIS—Pleas for charity coming to the St. Louis Provident Assn. during January again established a new high record, unequalled during the 60-odd years of the organization's life