

Throughout the World of Labor

In Spain after the Fall of the Dictatorship Monarchy, Republic or Proletarian Revolution?

On March 1st, we published an article by comrade Gorkin on "The Fall of Primo de Rivera and Its Consequences". In connection with this article comrade Trotsky made certain comments, bearing particularly on the agitation of the petty bourgeoisie for a republic and the attitude of the workers towards this agitation. Comrade Gorkin replies below.

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

I shall attempt to clarify you on the points raised in your letter of February 12.

In my article, I stated that "In the beginning the struggle would be led by the petty bourgeoisie, the republicans, and the socialists". Already the different conspirators against the dictatorship have been led by the petty bourgeoisie in concurrence with a large part of the army which feels itself to be "republican". The proletariat has hardly ever interfered for two principal reasons: because the organizers do not inspire the army with confidence—besides, the organizers fear the intervention of the proletariat—and because there is no Communist party or revolutionary class organization capable of launching the struggle. And the set-backs of these conspiracies have been due to just that: the lack of intervention of a genuine revolutionary element. It is a fact, too, that the struggle against the monarchy—in a weak and legalistic manner, it is true—is now being led by the petty bourgeoisie. They hold the monarchy responsible—contrary to us, who, of course, hold imperialism as a whole responsible—for the Moroccan "adventure", the loss of millions in money and huge loss in life, crowned by the catastrophe at Annual, even as at the time of the coup d'etat. The dictatorship was the monarchy's last card. Almost everyone in Spain realized this. Sanchez Guerra, former leader of the Conservative Party, a thoroughly dynastic party, prepares for presiding over a sort of heterogeneous Left bloc, embracing those who demanded a revision of the constitution, the various shades of republicans, up to the socialists—we shall return to him in due time. Ossorio y Gallardo, one of Maura's former lieutenants, a Christian socialist, known for his demagoguery which very often forces him to use language more radical than that of the socialist "lackeys", threatens to call for an accounting of the King's liabilities; and Romanones himself—whom you know well for having caused your expulsion from Spain in 1916—has begun to extol a form of republic, presided over by the king—a form of "republican monarchy". He has saved the monarchy twice already and at present wishes to save it again, but under the cloak of—a president of the Republic. Those former politicians who dare to speak of their monarchism, do so in a very weak voice. So unpopular is the monarchy at the present time that even those most monarchistically inclined, believe it prudent to disguise themselves as republicans; an example is one of Maura's sons, the assassin of Ferrer. Plainly, this disguise can fool only imbeciles.

Why the Petty Bourgeoisie Are Republican

But let us return to our petty bourgeoisie. Their republicanism is, as you have so well put it, the expression of despair. This despair is the result of deep-seated political and economic causes. Thus—the heaviest taxes bear down upon them. From 1922 to 1928 levies increased by 1,292 million pesetas*. Provincial and municipal taxes increased proportionally (the sums realized by municipal and provincial councils increased to 965 millions between 1923 and 1929). Spain maintains a corps of officers of much higher rank proportionally than those of other countries. This explains why in the last budget, so large a budgetary

* The peseta is worth about 12 cents on the exchange.

item was added to the ordinary budget of the dictatorship; \$90 million pesetas were assigned to the army and navy, whereas only a 172 million was assigned for public education. This does not take into account the 700 millions expended by the dictatorship for war material and the 377 millions spent for the navy, this being reckoned into the extraordinary budget, as well as the loan of 500 millions recently raised.

The deficit of the expositions of Seville and Barcelona, about 500 million pesetas, must be added. In a word, the ordinary budget has risen from 2,379 millions in 1923 to 4,185 millions and the public debt which was 14,700 millions in 1923 is today—these are the official figures—more than 21,000 million and to this must be added the debt of about 350 million pesetas destined for manipulation of the international money market. It can be said that at the liquidation of the dictatorial period the debt exceeded 23,000 million. Since Spain has a population of about 22 million this represents a debt of about 1,050 pesetas for each inhabitant.

To this must be added that during the dictatorial period the petty bourgeoisie suffered on two fronts: the constant intervention of the economic organs of the state which hindered its development, and the concentration of the national economy into the hands of the big financiers and industrialists which threatened its existence as a class. The republicanism of the petty bourgeoisie is completely explained: it holds the monarchy responsible for the experiences of the dictatorship and demands a new constitution which would make impossible a renewal of such experiences.

Fear of the Proletariat

Will the petty bourgeoisie be able to set into motion the masses of workers and peasants in a struggle for the bourgeois republic? No. Today as yesterday, during the conspiracies, it fears the proletariat. Recently the demonstrating unemployed in Madrid—we shall speak of the unemployment situation presently—sought the aid of the students. The latter, although clamorous the day before, refused. And the Republicans and Socialists said to the unemployed: "Remain quiet, you will spoil everything". The petty bourgeoisie who desire a small tranquil republic, attained by legalistic means are afraid that the proletariat will interfere with their plans. As between the reactionary bourgeoisie and the revolutionary proletariat, their choice will be made quickly. Besides, Sanchez Guerra is preparing to place himself at the head of the petty bourgeoisie and this is very significant. One word about this man: in 1903 while governor of Madrid he compromised himself in the assassination of a news dealer who took part in a workers' demonstration. In 1909 while minister together with Maura and La Cierva, he was one of those responsible for the "bloody week" of Barcelona, and for the assassination of Ferrer. In 1917 while at the head of the conservative government, he played a sinister role in violently suppressing the great revolutionary strike and mutilating the dead bodies of the strikers. These are three small exploits of the "saviour" who is preparing to attempt the "operation".

The Condition of the Workers and Peasants

Before taking up what our position toward the republican petty bourgeoisie should be, let us say a few words on the situation of the workers and peasants. If the conditions of the petty bourgeoisie are bad, those of the workers are naturally much worse. This is especially evident in the form of chronic unemployment. For the past two years the number of unemployed has been: thirty percent of the mining basin of Asturias, sixty percent in the Biscay, from thirty to forty percent of the building industry of Madrid (in the latter

industry in Madrid there are at present 35,000 unemployed).

The ultra-protectionist policies of the dictatorship during the last few years has lowered these figures somewhat, but these policies have at the same time caused living expenses to rise higher and higher. The unemployment situation will become intensified still more by the fact that the new government is stopping the major part of the public works undertaken by the dictatorship. The unemployed do not receive any aid from the state or from the municipalities. Those who do work receive niggardly wages.

The conditions of the agricultural workers are still worse. The Spanish peasantry, especially in Andalusia and in Castile, have always been subjected to the most miserable conditions possible. (Spain is a country with an agricultural economy; 71 percent of the population of Spain are peasants.) Side by side with the large estates there are thousands of agricultural farm workers without land and without work. In Andalusia side by side with acres and acres of non-productive land used for hunting, there are thousands of farm hands who work no more than 50 to 80 days during the year and that for starvation wages. It is there that the class differences are sharpest. Also, the class hatreds are easily aroused there. In 1918-1920, while struggles of large magnitude were unfolding in the principal centers under the influence of the October revolution, the Andalusian province was in a ferment of revolt. The workers burned the harvests of the large estates, ran through the streets crying "Long live Lenin!" "Long live Trotsky;" disarmed the police and freed their arrested comrades. The peasant nurses abandoned the children of the rich...

The Workers' Awakening

It is evident that the masses of workers and peasants will awake to struggle soon enough. If this awakening is not yet an accomplished fact, it is due to the absence of a strong and disciplined Communist Party and revolutionary unions. We should expect powerful strikes which must be coordinated by connecting the economic demands with revolutionary political aims. It will be necessary to know how to link up the strike movements with unemployed movements. This plainly calls for special organizing of unemployed. And if the movement becomes really serious, and if conditions warrant the belief that it can develop with sufficient rapidity, activity should be directed, as you say quite correctly, towards militant propaganda for the election of Soviets and for the permanent slogan, For a Workers' and Peasants' government. (The slogan has just been launched by the Spanish Communist Party.)

A few lines now on class organizations. The only Party that had a legal existence during the dictatorship, outside of the Patriotic Union, is the Socialist Party; and the only workers organization, aside from the so-called "free" unions (organized by Martinez Amido during the period of harsh oppression)—is the Confederation of Labor. The collaboration of the Socialists with all the economic and political organizations of the dictatorship was the price of this legality. The Socialist Party numbers between 7 and 8 thousand members; the Confederation of Labor, some 200 thousand members. The latter are recruited mainly in Madrid and the backward rural districts. The well known anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labor succeeded with difficulty in retaining 25 thousand members. The worker and peasant masses will swiftly create powerful revolutionary organizations. It is highly improbable that the reformist organization will succeed in augmenting its effective forces (as a contrast the National Confederation of Labor can see once again the splendor of former times.) It remains for us Communists to gain influence in its midst and to try to obtain the leadership.

After what I have said above, it is unnecessary to lay much stress on the subject of our relations with social-bourgeois

republicanism. For the petty bourgeoisie the republic is a goal; for us it can be a stage toward the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our tactics are clear: struggle against the Monarchy, and, at the same time unmask the republicans and socialists, while organizing the proletariat for the social revolution. Our permanent slogan must be: A government of the workers and peasants. When the moment arrives, we must agitate for the elections of Soviets. It would be ridiculous to forward this slogan now. The street fights against the police and their machine guns, the revolutionary strikes and the demonstrations with red flags in the forefront, exist unfortunately, only in the minds of the scribblers of Humanite. Having seen a manifesto of the Communist Party of Spain, calling on this for the future and not knowing a word of Spanish, nor, for that matter, a word of Leninism, they believe that this had actually happened.

The Opposition and the Party

A final very important point: our Oppositional relations with the Communist Party of Spain. The position of the Party could not be any weaker. Since its founding, it has suffered from a series of crises which have reduced it to almost nothing. The Communist International shares a large part of the responsibility for this situation. It has favored a leadership of bureaucrats without the following of the Party to a fighting, capable and devoted leadership.

The Party is beginning to reorganize. Possibilities exist for the formation of a strong proletarian Party (a Party with four, six or eight thousand well-disciplined members could be a revolutionary force of the first magnitude in Spain.) Its organization is not difficult at this moment; on the contrary, it is very easy. The betrayals of the Socialists and the relative state of decomposition of anarcho-syndicalism, make the situation favorable for this organization. We must primarily work toward the capture of the Federations (of the seven regional federations; the three most important are in fact with us: the Asturian, the Catalanian and the Valencian).

This is a very good starting point.

—GORKIN

War on Russia Cry U. S. Imperialists

The "Russian menace" was the chief topic of discussion at a preparedness "patriotic dinner" held by the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, at the Hotel Astor, New York City, on March 27.

Among those present were Mayor Waller of New York, General Ely, Brig. General Delafield, and Major Hardenbrugh. Coming together for a discussion of the possibility of an attack by a "foreign invader", the discussion continued on the need to increase the military preparedness of the United States. But the discussion did not linger on this very long. It turned to a discussion on who this "foreign invader" might be.

Militarist Hounds for War on Soviet Union

General Delafield in his speech minced no words in declaring that the menace to the world was Russia. He made it clear that this was not the problem of the United States alone, but became the task of the leading imperialists of the world to unite in this common struggle. The speech contained lengthy invectives against the working class government of the Soviet Union; in closing, Delafield emphasized the need of the United States to join "with France, Great Britain and the other nations in preparing to ward off the Russian menace." (N. Y. Times, March 28)

This session of militarists is part of the concerted organization of the capitalist powers preparing for assault against the Soviet Union. While disagreeing among themselves, they are as one on the question of uniting to destroy the working class of Soviet Russia and the proletarian dictatorship. It is well that the workers of this country remember the Walkers, Davisons, and Delafields.