

First of May in Madrid

MADRID—

The most profound contradiction existing between the feudal-clerical monarchy and Spanish capitalism expressed itself in the particularism of the Spanish provinces. The bourgeois republic has inherited from the former regime this political calamity, which constitutes one of the most serious obstacles to the centralization of the forces of the Spanish bourgeoisie.

It is not only a question of Catalonia, which itself is merely a question of the struggle between the Catalan capitalist bourgeoisie and the agrario-feudal Spanish bourgeoisie that creates the differences on the political map of Spain. From Biscaye, with its industrial center at Bilbao, all the way over to Seville, the capital of Andalusia, and passing through Madrid, Spain presents a multitude of diverse regions whose political traditions, especially those of the working class and the peasantry, vary in a most surprising fashion. It is known today, after the voluminous correspondence of the tourists of the world press, that the proletarian movement in industrial Catalonia has for a long time been dominated over by anarcho-syndicalism, which was a revolutionary tendency at outset while the workers and the employees of Madrid, a first rate administrative city, have been subject to the almost exclusive influence of social democratic reformism. But if we are not content with a bird's eye view alone, we will discover that the industrial proletariat of Bilbao has always been affiliated to the reformist social democracy and led by Prieto, the present socialist minister, while the backward labor movement of Andalusia is at present influenced to a certain degree by the Communist party. Yet, despite these contrasts and this diversity of influence in respect to place, a sentiment exists, a class instinct, which unites all the exploited masses of Spain and of Catalonia and that is: their vague, indistinct—I would say amorphous—sympathy for Communism, for Soviet Russia.

The Communist party has not been able to capitalize on this sympathy and to give it an organized and durable form. From the beginning of the discussion within the C. I., which was accompanied by persecutions against the Left Opposition, the Comintern bureaucracy has pursued only one aim in Spain, and that was to keep up at all costs, even at the price of expelling whole organizations, a little hand of loyalities. The Comintern bureaucracy has realized its aims: at present, the adherents of the C. I. in Spain are limited to the Executive Committee of what once used to be the Communist Party of Spain. When one speaks in Madrid or in the rest of Spain of the official Communist party, one says "the Executive Committee". This expression has become the synonym everywhere for the official party, because the Executive, with the support of the C. I., has expelled the entire Catalan federation, the entire Madrid federation and does not accept the adherence of the federation of Duero and of the numerous militants in Bilbao and elsewhere who have expressed their solidarity with those expelled.

This stupid tactic of Stalinist cretinism has in a certain measure brought positive results for Communism in Spain. This is not at all paradoxical. The Spanish working masses have not experienced the vicissitudes of the criminally false policies of the C. I. after 1923. The members of the appointed Executive Committee have remained unknown to the masses of workers and this fact has spared the Spanish proletariat the disastrous experiences of Centrist adventurism, particularly those of the "third period".

Communism, as the inspiration of the exploited masses, therefore remains unimpaired by Stalinist decadence as far as Spain is concerned. This is a fact that can be established here, everywhere and at all times. In my first letter, I spoke of the sympathy of the people in Catalonia for Communism. In Madrid the situation is equally if not even more favorable:

On the eve of May first an important spontaneous demonstration took place before the Portuguese Consulate to protest against the suppression of the insurrectionary movement in Portugal. Nearly three thousand demonstrators, workers and students, expressed their indignation with cries of "down with dictatorship", "Long live Communism", and "Long live the Soviets!"

The first of May also was a splendid demonstration for Communism. In speaking of Madrid, we must distinguish between the organizations and the fighting spirit of the Madrid proletariat. Almost the entire demonstration, in which nearly 200,000 people participated, marched under

the banners of the reformist unions led by the cabinet minister, Largo Caballero. Only a group of from 300 to 400 workers demonstrated under the Communist banner with the hammer and the sickle of the transport union led by our comrades. But the slogans issued by our comrades, their cheers for the Russian revolution, for the Soviets, for the arming of the people, for comrade Trotsky, etc., were taken up by the voices of thousands of workers who followed the banners of their reformist unions.

When our contingent passed the Central Post Office, hundreds of postal employees greeted us with prolonged applause. All along the Paseo del Prado, the crowds gathered on the sidewalks looked at our little group, determined, energetic, enthusiastic, sometimes with open sympathy, sometimes with curiosity but never with hostility. Our group was the only one that sang in harmony and with spirit the proletarian hymn, the "Internationale", so that the demonstrators from the reformist unions who followed behind us were several times induced to sing the "Internationale" instead of the "Marseillaise".

A whole batch of pamphlets on the "Spanish Revolution" by comrade Trotsky were sold out in half an hour.

Where was the Executive Committee (I use the current expression that refers to the official party) on the First of May? It called an unemployed demonstration at the Puerta del Sol, in the center of the city. But in this demonstration, as in all of its activity, the Executive Committee was all alone completely isolated. When our contingent passed the Paseo Recoletos, a dozen or so "demonstrators" from the Puerta del Sol joined us, since the unemployed had not showed up. That day the Executive Com-

The Bourgeoisie and the Spanish Revolution

Bearing down all their weight to bridle the revolutionary movement and to hold the masses in check, the socialist republican leaders brought about a change of régime as, a consequence of the municipal elections held the twelfth of April. The revolutionary movement in Spain had acquired such force that the course of future events depended entirely upon the strength of the class that assumed the hegemony of the movement. All the republicans—from the ultra-right to the socialists who have absolute control and leadership in the U. G. T. (the reformist General Union of Workers) united their forces for the sole purpose of cutting off all opportunities from the working class movement. On the other hand, the anarcho-syndicalists who have almost full power over the C. N. T. (National Confederation of Labor) have given their support and reinforced the bourgeois republicans; their anti-politicalism has as usual caused them to capitulate at the decisive moment before the policies of the enemy class, without even employing the demagogic revolutionary phrases that characterized the anarcho-syndicalist movement up to 1923. So it happened that the republican bourgeoisie itself practically dominated over both trade union centers in Spain, although it did not by that at all overcome its fear of the masses.

Nevertheless, it was only natural that these guarantees were not sufficient for the republican bourgeoisie. They are obliged, due to the resistance of the monarchist camp, to use force, which from the very moment the régime was overthrown forecast even more profound results. That is why it exerted every effort to avoid the intervention of the masses. Although they had a liberal distaste for the interference of military people in politics, still it was to them that they entrusted the armed struggle in December, reducing the masses to the rôle of "extras". The failure of the revolutionary attempt in the month of December is due primarily to this very fact.

After the election of April 12, the forces which had supported the monarchy, the big bourgeoisie, the aristocrats, the clergy, had become convinced that it would be best for their own interests not to put up any resistance to the republic and its decidedly conservative leaders. In view of the results of the vote, these elements said: "We monarchists and republicans must unite to save Spain from chaos". These were the words of *La Nación*, which was formerly the organ of Primo de Rivera and which lives with the support of the big bourgeoisie. In the last moments, that is, late in the day of April 14, even the king was convinced that the best thing for him to do was to leave the road clear for the republic. The provisional government took the responsibility for the absconding of Alfonso of Bourbon.

mittee discredited itself a little more.

The demonstration of May first showed the Opposition comrades in Madrid ("Agrupacion Communist de Madrid") that the unification of the Communist forces in Spain can be brought about only by the expelled Oppositionists themselves. The Executive Committee deliberately sabotages the work of unification and of the construction of a unified Communist party in Spain. In this destructive work, it is assisted by the Stalinist epigones of L'Humanite and the C. I. But their resistance is powerless and will have no effect. The idea of a Unification Congress of all the groups and individual militants, both expelled and not expelled by the Executive Committee, is making headway throughout Spain and especially in the Catalan federation, where illusions about the good intentions of the Comintern leaders are still widespread. At Madrid, in the "Agrupacion Communist" which numbers about three hundred militants expelled from the party, the hope for an understanding on the part of the C. I. of the real interests of the Spanish revolutionary movement is becoming ever more feeble. The Left Opposition has shown by concrete examples from the international Communist movement that the acts of the Executive Committee in Spain are the model for the entire tactic of the C. I. in the whole world. The "Agrupacion de Madrid" has understood, and in this it is distinguished from the majority of the Catalan federation, that in Spain, unity will be achieved against the bureaucrats of the C. I., and that no compromise with them is possible. At Madrid, the Spanish Left Opposition has won quite a bit of ground for revolutionary activity. The tasks of the vanguard in the revolutionary events in Spain are becoming clear and precise. The Left Opposition of Spain is growing in the same degree as the exploited Spanish masses are awakening to the struggle.

May 3, 1931.

J. OBIN.

Papal Drugs for Labor

Karl Marx wrote: "Religion is the opium of the people."

History is replete with examples of ruling-class hypocrisy . . . Today, 1931, Pope Pius XI well upholds that tradition. In a radio address on May 16, the venerable Pope, speaking to millions of workers throughout the world, puts forth a program for the people in exactly three words: "Prayer, action and sacrifice". Prayer the first essential . . . Action is the next thing action of charity and of justice and of the peace of Christ among the classes . . . "What is even more necessary than action is sacrifice, perseverance, method and discipline in your work, which demand the submission of your personal ideas and also demand your co-ordination and subordination as workers."

Then the Pope branches out as an economist. (Truly the man's powers are unlimited). Says the Pope: "The differences in social conditions in the human family, which were wisely decreed by the Creator, [ah!] must not and cannot ever be abolished. . . ." But "It is essential that the proletariat be enabled gradually to obtain some of the advantages enjoyed by the proprietors." (e. g. in Spain, where the church "proprietors" appropriate a comfortable part of the wealth of the country, and the unemployed number several hundred thousand—if they gradually enable this part of the proletariat to gain some of the advantages enjoyed by the proprietors—why just simply "enable" one thousand of those unemployed every year and in a mere several hundred years unemployment will have been solved).

Now then, how is the Pope going to accomplish all this? By "raising the wage of the worker"! Evidently, friend Pope is not exactly a Marxist. Or he would know that the only time in history that the working-class has ever gotten a raise, in wages has been when it has organized and fought militantly for it against the ruling class of its time—and the Catholic Church, one of the biggest of property-owners even to-day, constitutes one section of that ruling class. Further, that an economic law operates which causes a "mysterious" rise in prices whenever such a "raise" does occur. The illusion on the score of wages, was quite adequately explained by Karl Marx in Vol. I of "Capital", much better than the Pope could dream of doing it.

And more of such rot as: "class collaboration instead of class war, etc."

Finally, why does the Pope suddenly come out with his little speech? Because it is in the interest of the church as well as of capitalism that the masses must be handed out their opiate. Especially when we witness the uprisings in Spain—and when international capitalism views with increasing alarm the growth of the "crisis" and the rising mood of rebellion on the part of the masses.

The historical difference between the two is that the church speaks of prayer and sacrifice and capitalism speaks of democracy and of freedom. The common basis of the two is the exploitation of the masses—one in the interests of an ecclesiastical hierarchy; the other in the interests of an industrial hierarchy. The common solution to both is the "action" of the masses for the overthrow of both; the economic emancipation of man, with the ultimate abolition of classes and therefore of all hierarchies.

It is indeed interesting to note a statement in the same issue of the *Times* by Louis Waldman, New York State Chairman of the Socialist Party—wherein he views the Pope's attack on Socialism as "most amazing" and "ill-founded". He concludes: "There is nothing inconsistent between socialism and Catholicism or any other organized religion. One deals with the affairs of the State and the other with the affairs of the Spirit of God. We welcome the Pope's conversion to the doctrine of labor, but we regard his attack as ill-founded."

Also in the same issue Matthew Woll, arch-demagogue and reactionary labor leader par excellence, is "pleased that Pontiff reaffirms workers rights" and "endorses his view that neither capital nor labor has a right to demand all the fruits of their collaborate labor."

The working-class learns slowly—but it will learn to place alongside of the Pope as its most insidious enemies, the figures of Woll and Waldman—the A. F. of L. leaders and their "class collaboration", and the Socialist party with its "ballot box" and "peaceful evolution" theories.

To the words of Marx on religion we add the words of Lenin on the Social Democracy: "They are the agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the working-class"

—HERBERT CAPELIS.

—L. FERSEN.

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