

SPANISH REVOLUTION REACHES CRITICAL STAGE

Workers Mised as Capitalist Class Conspires Against Them

By ALFREDO ROJAS

The Spanish revolution has arrived at that critical juncture, so often seen in previous revolutions, when all sections of the bourgeoisie conspire to rob the proletariat of the fruits of its struggle and are aided in their maneuvers by the cowardice and confusion of the official leadership of the proletarian organizations.

The city and land workers still forge ahead, coming ever more into direct conflict with the "left" bourgeois government of Azana. Within the last week alone, the land workers of Spain have confiscated large estates in three provinces.

Dividing the Landed Estates

The biggest movement on the land is in the province of Badajoz where, after sixty thousand workers had surveyed the estates, but then returned to their villages and contented themselves merely with drawing up plans for dividing the estates into small parcels and apparently had been persuaded to wait for the government's land-buying program, two days later 25,000 families marched back into the estates, divided them up, and are already tilling the soil.

In the province of Seville thousands of land workers went on strike, driving many landowners from their estates; government guards sent to drive off the workers killed four but had to retreat.

In Gerona province workers are confiscating estates.

In Malaga workers attempting to seize estates were attacked by government guards, two of them being murdered. These are merely fragmentary reports from capitalist press sources, and indicate a country-wide move on the estates.

How much of this move is purely spontaneous, is indicated by the statement given to the United Press on March 29 by Juan Simeon Vidarte, secretary of the Socialist Party executive in Badajoz. He declared that the workers were simply surveying the estates but would wait for the government to parcel them out legally. Vidarte flatly denied that the workers were taking possession of the lands. Two days later came the news that 25,000 families had taken over the estates.

Strike Movement Aggressive

The workers in the cities are also on the move. Strikes are widespread throughout Spain, in almost every case resulting in resounding victories. Typical of the feeling of the workers is the ultimatum presented to the bosses by the powerful metal workers' organization of Barcelona. Striking for wage increases and a 44-hour week, the workers notified the bosses that unless their demands are shortly granted, they will occupy the factories and run them on a socialist basis.

In Valencia, the various trade unions, hitherto sharply divided, have united to force the bosses to rehire all workers discharged on political grounds during the last few years. The Azana government has not attempted to enforce the law for rehiring, and Valencia's example shows that the proletariat is beginning to take the matter into its own hands.

Still Clinging to Azana

While the land and city workers are thus coming into ever sharper conflict with the republican government, the Socialist and Communist leadership is hanging onto the coattails of the Azana government. The republican bourgeois groups, having got the best of the bargain in the February 16 national elections by being given an absolute majority of the seats on the joint republican-workers' slate, demanded a similar joint slate for the municipal elections which take place on April 12. The Communist party immediately came out for such a coalition. After a sharp disagreement within the Socialist ranks, the left Socialists demanding an independent proletarian course in the municipal elections, the Right Wing Socialists were victorious and the Socialist party agreed to enter a joint slate.

The apologists for the coalition with the bourgeoisie in the February 16th elections defended the coalition on the grounds that it was solely for amnesty and restoration of democratic rights. This excuse no longer holds for the April 12 coalition. The "left" government, in fact, is curtailing democratic rights. Spain is under a modified form of martial law decreed by Azana. The government has prohibited all outdoor meetings and congregating on the streets. It has sent guards and troops to put down the land workers. It is with this bourgeois government that the April 12th coalition is being made.

Catholics Boycott Elections

What makes the coalition even more ludicrous is the fact that the Catholics and Monarchists and other reactionary groups have announced that they will boycott the municipal elections. They are boy-

cotting because they know they have no chance of victory. But this boycott means that if the Socialist Party, which is by far the main party of the proletariat, were to conduct an independent campaign, it could sweep the country.

Instead of the proletariat taking advantage of the situation, it is the republican bourgeoisie which seeks to reap a harvest. The republican press does not criticize the reactionaries for the boycott, using it as proof conclusive that the reactionaries refuse to submit to the will of the majority. On the contrary, the government is coquetting with the reactionaries' demand that the government call off the municipal elections.

In this move, it is very likely that there is a secret understanding between Azana and the reactionaries. Knowing that the rights cannot win the elections, and fearing that the proletarian organizations, even if they do not conduct an independent campaign may nevertheless force through a proletarian majority on the joint election slate, the reactionaries may have withdrawn in order to give the Azana government a pretext for forcing through a bourgeois majority on the joint ticket.

The Threat of Postponement

This is borne out by the way the question is posed in the republican press. "La Libertad," republican organ, declares that "the tactic of the rightists in abstaining creates a problem that deserves serious consideration by the government." It gives as the reason why the government may perhaps decide to call off the elections, that there is a possibility of a break between the republicans and the proletarian organizations over a location of seats on the election slates. "Can such a question cause a division in the Popular Front?" asks this bourgeois spokesman. "We do not believe it, we do not expect it, but it is necessary to consider this possibility. United, the victory will be as decisive as that of February 16. But the government should reflect whether it is not convenient for the republican regime to make a postponement. Today the local governments of Spain are composed of left elements (i.e., bourgeois republican major-

A Ray of Hope

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At numerous mass meetings, Javier Bueno has declared his lack of confidence in the Popular Front, and has urged the workers to build the Workers Alliances, embryo of the soviets, as the indispensable instrument of both the immediate and future struggles.

A Letter from Italy

(Continued from Page 3)

I could safely say that over half the inhabitants of Naples are hungry half the time.

"This is by no means all. For five months now, workers have been forbidden to quit their jobs on penalty of losing their syndicate cards. They can however as before be fired at the will of their employers. This system of labor conscription has been given an appearance of equality and a legal covering by the provision that the bosses must first get permission to discharge from the Fascist syndicate, but in my experience I have not known any cases where permission was refused. It is a mere formality and subterfuge. This has all the advantages of chattel slavery without any of its disadvantages. And the Italian workers are asked to support the war and enlist in the army in order to abolish slavery in Ethiopia!"

"Why do the workers endure such intolerable conditions? They cannot for the time being do otherwise. The pervasive system of espionage and the governmental terror make it impossible for them to speak out openly against their oppressors or to strike at them. They bear their burdens with clenched teeth and closed fist.

The Opposition Movement

"So far as I have been able to ascertain, there is almost no organized opposition working underground against the regime among the workers. There were a number of small revolutionary groups, organized in groups of five, operating in the utmost secrecy a few years ago. But police agents succeeded in worming their way into them; broke them up; and the revolutionists are now in prison or on the penal islands.

"Many of the older workers remember the occupations of the factories during 1921-22 and retain their Socialist convictions. The younger generation, however, I regret to report, that has been brought up under the present regime and stuffed with Fascist propaganda, are greatly confused by Mussolini's demagoguery. They have had no Socialist education, are taken in by his anti-capitalist utterances; and more or less believe that the empty fist he waves at the capitalists will be brought down upon them and used to crush them. But they will learn from their own bitter experience what Fascism really is.

"I wish I could convey to you the extent of the espionage system. It is the cement that holds the regime together. Spies are everywhere from 1931-A.R.). To leave them continue in their present status would mean to prolong the victory of February. But whether the government decides to postpone the elections or to hold them as decreed, the Popular Front should continue united on the same republican aspirations as those which were victorious in February. Any other conception (i.e., that of revolutionary class struggle-A.R.) would be premature."

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Army Held in Readiness

In order to frighten the already cowardly proletarian leadership into granting the republican bourgeoisie's demands, every section of the bourgeoisie is making dire threats. The republican press becomes the end of the Republic if the workers are not reasonable. If there is any danger of the republic from the left, the army will step in, declare capitalist press dispatches. President Zamora is quoted "from reliable sources," as prepared to establish a government of national concentration, if there is any danger of a revolution.

Thus all sections of the bourgeoisie conspire to consolidate the bourgeois state power. The only answer to this bulldozing is the independent concentration of proletarian power in the Workers Alliances. Only this power can prevent a debacle. But instead of breaking with their already treacherous "left" bourgeois allies, the Communist and Socialist leaders are trailing them.

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Support for "Democratic" Capitalism

Of all the ideas prevalent in the Second International, few are as deceptive, treacherous and fraught with calamity for the world's working class as the doctrine that the proletariat must support the "democratic" capitalist nations in a war with the Fascist countries. Between 1914 and 1918, identically the same conception converted most of the Socialist parties into cannon-fodder suppliers for their respective capitalist fatherlands. Nothing having changed in the Old Guard of the Second International, Powers is consequently to be found today among the teachers of social-patriotic doctrine. Let a war break out tomorrow between Fascist Germany and "democratic" imperialist France for a new re-division of the world, and Powers is certain to range himself on the side of the French butchers. The fact that Italy, Poland and Yugoslavia would, in all likelihood, be counted in the French "democratic" front, would make no difference to Powers. For it should be remembered that his predecessors of 1914 were not made less illogical in their support of the Allies because of the fact that the Czar and the Mikado were also "making the world safe for democracy."

The League of Nations is today merely a pseudonym for the so-called "democratic" countries.

Jointly dominated by France, the slave-master of Europe, and England, slave-owner on six continents, its principal pre-occupation in world politics in our time has been (and is) the preservation of the unchangeable status quo. The status quo—the state of things as they are—means not only the inamorous Versailles treaty (which formed part of the yeast on which Hitlerism rose to power) but also the oppressive rule of bankrupt capitalism over tens of millions of workers and hundreds of millions of colonial serfs.

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A DUBIOUS ALLY FOR STALINISM

HOW THE "OLD GUARD" BECOMES A "FRIEND OF THE SOVIET UNION" AS SOON AS LITVINOV PLAYS LEAGUE OF NATIONS POLITICS

By MAX SHACHTMAN

What is cheaper and easier nowadays than to be a "Friend of the Soviet Union"? Is there a labor politician so lacking in astuteness as not to understand that merely by avowing himself a "friend" of Russia he automatically acquires from the international Socialist officialdom an extensive measure of immunity and support for what may well be (and usually is) his entirely reactionary policy? There are many left who remain obtuse on this score, but their number diminishes daily.

Among those who have recently caused the number to diminish is the new recruit to the "friends" of the Soviet Union, a man who also bears the name of "John Powers." Powers, in addition to his literary work for other reactionary papers, not only writes every week the international news column of the New Leader, official organ of the Socialist party's "Old Guard," but is in a fair way of becoming the leading theoretician of his faction.

Up to quite recently, Powers has not made the slightest effort to conceal his rabid hatred of the Soviet Union, of communism, of everything for which the Russian revolution stands in the minds of Marxists. Even if rather less sensationally, he has been to the estates of Adolph Ochs and James O'Neal what Harry Lang was to the estates of William Randolph Hearst and Abraham Cahan. It goes without saying that especially since the sharpening of the Socialist party's internal struggle between the Left wing and the Old Guard, hardly a week has gone by in the New Leader without a venomous and malicious attack on the "Militant group" from Powers' pen. Between the pages of the New York Times and the columns of the Old Guard press he has laid down a drum-fire attack upon every progressive and revolutionary current in the Socialist movement. No social democratic idea so reactionary, no current so sterile, no record so bankrupt, but that Powers has come pugnaciously to its defense.

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League's sub-soil and requiring only the tender and patient care of social democratic cabinet ministers for their eventual emergence into full flower.

The Soviet Union's affiliation to the League has had the same effect in the ranks of the working class as the continued support of "the thieves' kitchen at Geneva" by the Second International. An even more damaging effect, however, and that precisely because the Soviet Union today still stands for the great traditions of the Russian revolution in the minds of the masses, and its action could only serve to give the League of Bandits a net credit rating where it had formerly had none.

To the same extent that the Stalin-Litvinov policy in the League of Nations has brought confusion and demoralization into the working class, it has earned the Soviet bureaucracy the approbation of the Second International. Why not? The more "realistic" Stalin becomes, that is, the more violently he tramples under foot the teachings of Marx and Lenin and the interests of the world revolution, the more confidently the rulers of the Second International feel that he is one of them.

But even more than this is involved. Having brought Soviet nationalism to its logical culmination in social-patriotism, Stalin makes it possible for the patriots in the Second International to trade on the revolutionary reputation of Russia in their base work of mobilizing the proletariat for the coming war. What is new in the situation now as compared with 1914, therefore, is that now, with the aid of Stalinism, the Second International can perform its reactionary role in the name of "defending the Soviet Union."

Where lies one of the greatest, if not the greatest hope for a genuinely proletarian movement and struggle against the impending imperialist war? For that world peace which only international socialism can assure? In the sweep to the Left of the militant Socialist elements in the Second International, in their logical evolution to the position of consistent revolutionary Marxism. In a number of countries, these elements are moving at greater or lesser speed, with greater or lesser clarity, away from the classic conceptions of social reformism, and especially away from the latter's capitalist patriotism. And the clubs with which the Right wing bureaucracy seeks to beat them back, are being taken more and more from the arsenal of Stalinism.

Powers offers a concrete instance of how this is being done. In the attempt to smash the Militant Group, he calls upon Stalin-Litvinov for aid and invokes their conception of the "defense of the Soviet Union" to buttress his reactionary position.

Let us quote extensively from him, so that we may see the full significance of the growing rapprochement between the Right wing of the Second International and the bureaucracy of the Third.

Powers' "Concern" for Russian Revolution

"Litvinov's speech before the Council of the League of Nations in London on Tuesday," he begins (New Leader, March 21, 1936), "emphasized again the extent to which Soviet Russia is committed to collaboration with the League and her military allies, France and Czechoslovakia, against Hitler Germany's war plans. For Soviet Russia to pursue any other policy would be to neglect criminally her very life interests and to jeopardize the conquests of the revolution. After Hitler's speech announcing the advance of German troops into the demilitarized Rhineland, there could be no more doubt of the aims of German policy. What Hitler offered to Europe was a 25-year peace guarantee in the West in exchange for a free hand against Russia. The militarist-Fascist bandits of Germany have the temerity to suggest openly that if permitted to despoil and dismember Russia, they will not attack the rest of Europe. Litvinov emphasized this point very well and exposed completely the true character of Hitler's objectives.

"In the light of the very real and formidable danger confronting So-

viet Russia both from Germany and Japan, no Socialist aware of the realities of the situation and possessing a sense of responsibility can criticize Soviet Russia for its policy of collaboration with the League and of any countries whose interests coincide with Soviet Russia's in the task of checkmating Hitler's war conspiracy. The interests of self-defense justify fully the sharp change in Soviet Russia's foreign policy from ill-founded, bitter opposition to the League of Nations to 'class collaboration' with the League and any bourgeois governments whose own interests dictate the necessity of collaboration with Soviet Russia. We have no hesitation in saying that those Socialist and Communist of the Left who assail Russia's legitimate policy of self-defense are, speaking objectively, doing the work of Hitler and Fascism."

The Trotsky-Borah Amalgam

The reason for Powers' newly discovered passion for the Soviet Union becomes clearer a week later. In the March 28 issue of the New Leader he lets fly a new attack on Norman Thomas and the Socialist Militants. The latter are, according to Powers, "a curious combination of 'Left wing' communism and primitive, parochial American isolationism." His column, according to its headline, is devoted to "some comments on the Trotsky-Borah policy advocated by Thomas."

As is evident from the headline, Powers and Co. have learned quite a bit from the art of Stalinist politics. Just as Trotsky is always bracketed in the C.P. press with "White Guards and counter-revolutionists," the Old Guard has learned to bracket the Left wing with everyone and everything that is abhorren to conservative socialism. What, for example, have Trotsky and Borah in common, especially on the question at issue, the League of Nations? Borah stands, presumably, or American isolation in principle, for the preservation of American capitalist rule free from commitments in Europe, so that it may pursue a world imperialist policy with the maximum of latitude. Trotsky is opposed to the League of Nations on grounds common to every revolutionist, namely, because it is an association of imperialist brigands, and his opposition is entirely in conformity with his irreconcilable antagonism to capitalist rule in the United States, regardless of whether the latter is in the League or not.

The position taken by Norman Thomas, in spite of those of its aspects which are not consistent with his main argument, and therefore not thoroughgoing, is nevertheless infinitely closer to the revolutionary stand than the position of the Second International. In fact, the two move in opposite directions. Thomas, for example, declares that "only a socialist appeal presents real hope." If this means that the struggle against war can be conducted effectively only by means of an independent, militant working class movement, it is unassailable. The pontiffs of the Second International, however, who have worked with might and main to demoralize the proletarian movement, take the position that because the working class is prostrate and confused, the only way of "preventing" war is to get behind the capitalist war-mongers, or at least a section of them.

The Old Guard has long ago lost any belief in the ability of the working class not only to emancipate itself, but even to fight its daily battles under capitalism. The working class is to be saved from capitalism and its ravages, by supporting . . . capitalism and its institutions. "By deriding the League of Nations, the only international instrument for collective action available," Powers reproaches Thomas, ". . . he helps lend encouragement to the enemies of international cooperation and gives aid and comfort to Hitler."

The League, in Powers' mind, is the "only international instrument for collective action available," for one simple reason: He has not the slightest belief that the world proletarian movement, be it organized in the Second or Third Internationals, is available for collective action or action of any other kind in its own behalf!

The political alliance between the Old Guard social democrats and the Stalinists, not organizationally expressed only because of considerations of an essentially secondary order, only foreshadows that healthier and truly progressive coming together of all the revolutionary forces who understand the situation and know how to draw the proper conclusions from it.

The argument that the working class movement is weak and must seek assistance for its cause outside its own immediate ranks, that it must therefore support the League, "however inadequate," is arguing in a vicious circle. The proletarian movement is weak precisely because it supports the institutions of its class enemy. The way to keep it weak, to keep it unself-reliant, is to teach it to continue supporting enemy institutions. The labor movement internationally has indeed been brought to the edge of a treacherous swamp. It stands with one leg on firm soil; the other rests on the surface of the swamp. By that very fact it is unbalanced, and consequently weak. The Old Guard of the Second International, ardently assisted by Stalinism, keeps warning the working class that it is not in a firm position by itself and that the way to strengthen itself is to lean more heavily on the swamp. And the heavier it leans in that direction, the closer it comes to toppling over into the swamp and being entirely engulfed by it.

The Second International is preparing feverishly to play the same role in the coming war that it played in 1914. When Powers writes that its ends are "the maintenance of peace, if at all possible, and the mobilization of the nations and peoples against any military aggression by Hitler Fascism," he means: when war does break out, we will mobilize the proletariat for the trenches where it may be slaughtered in the interests of the "democratic" bandits, which ought to be at least as much consolation to the workers as it was in 1914-1918 to die for "republican" France, "poor little" Belgium and "democratic" America.

The Third International not only takes the same line of policy, but supplies the old school of social-patriots with a new argument which they did not have the benefit of twenty years ago: "defense of the Soviet Union." Under cover of this entirely correct slogan, all kinds of scoundrels, who either never gave a damn about the Soviet republic or who have been systematically undermining its revolutionary foundations, are fostering the poison of chauvinism in the body of the working class.

Whoever offers an antidote to this poison, whoever seeks to dispel it from the ranks of the proletariat, to make the latter healthy and strong and able to rely on and fight for itself, is now dismissed by both the old line bureaucracies by being labelled . . . a Trotskyist.

What significance must the Left wing Socialist necessarily attach to the fact that the reactionary and corrupt Old Guard of his party now attacks him in the same terms, with the same arguments, and even with the same shibboleths and labels, as the Stalinists have always attacked the revolutionary internationalists whom they finally expelled from their party!

Old Guard -- C. P. Draws Closer

The Stalinists, having completed their development towards social-patriotism, find that they have a decreasing attractive power for the Left wing Socialist workers—because they are travelling in opposite directions. For the same reason, the Stalinists find an increasingly common program—in theory and in action—with the reactionary wing of the Second International. Like draws unto like. For the same reason, those who are being so generally covered with the label of "Trotskyism" by the reactionary bureaucracies, even if not always very accurately and warranted, must inevitably draw together also. Coming from different directions though they have, travelling though they do at different paces, they are fluting their road towards the revolutionary proletarian struggle against war and Fascism, and against the whole system of capitalism from which these twin evils inexorably arise.

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JAPAN, CHINA & THE U.S.S.R.

The ar Crisis in the Far East

IS REVERTS TO «BLOC OF FOUR CLASSES» IN CHINA

SPEAKER
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Former editor, China Forum, recently returned from five years' sojourn in China.

QUESTIONS DISCUSSION
Ausp.: N. Y. District, Workers Party U.S.

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