

Spain's Unions in Pact against Stalinists

Syndicalist and Socialist Centers Join Hands to Halt C.P. Reactionary Drive

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Stalinists to force CNT members into Stalinist locals and the C.P. The rest implements these ends.

Blow at Stalinists

On the day this pact was published, the UGT National Executive took a number of important steps to carry it out. *Claridad* of Madrid (once Caballero's organ, but seized by the Stalinists at the end of April) and *Las Noticias* of Barcelona were declared no longer official organs of the UGT. Even more significant was the decision to superintend the incorporation into their respective National Unions in each industry, of the "regional federations" of Catalonia, and to call a Regional Congress in Catalonia at which only unions affiliated to the UGT would be admitted.

If these decisions are carried out, the fraudulent claim of the Stalinists to represent great masses in the trade unions will be effectively exposed. The tiny organization of the UGT existing in Catalonia at the beginning of the civil war, had been captured by the Stalinists and, since then, run regionally as a completely independent entity. The influx of the masses into the unions had been brazenly channelized into the regional set-up controlled by the Stalinists. The big organization of the railroad workers of Catalonia, for example, was controlled, not by the UGT National Federation of Railroad Workers, but the Stalinist Regional Committee! Stalinist control was maintained by two simple bureaucratic devices: the GEPCI, which quickly included in its ranks all the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements, was given proportional representation on the Regional Committee, as were the highly-conservative unions of government functionaries created after the civil war began; and, for the rest, the Stalinists simply refused to call a regional congress at which the unions could speak for themselves. In the name of the UGT, *Las Noticias* had called for the liquidation of the POUM, the arrest of the workers who had defended themselves May 3-7, intervention of the Generalidad in the factories, etc. If Caballero really carries out the decisions of July 29, Stalinism will suffer a tremendous defeat in Catalonia.

Stalinists Assail Pact

Mundo Obrero, chief Stalinist organ, bitterly attacked the UGT-CNT pact. (Abroad, however, where the Stalinists have been claiming control of the UGT, they hailed the move to unity!) Mundo Obrero particularly denounced the failure of the pact to include a pledge of support of the Negrin government.

The pact's blows against the bourgeois-Stalinist bloc, the attacks on it of the Stalinists, must not blind us to the two major defects of the agreement:

1. The program of action does not include a provision for defending the anti-fascist political prisoners, although both the CNT and left socialist press call for their defense. It includes no proposal to struggle against the vicious political censorship of the labor press, although both organizations suffer from it. It includes no agreement for protecting the centers and collectives of the two organizations against bourgeois-Stalinist repressions. It includes no protest against the decrees prohibiting armed police forces from joining trade unions, or those disarming the workers.

It does not protest the corrupting practice of separating the officers from the ranks of the soldiers by a system of unequal wages and rankings. Nor—and and this is a burning necessity as inflation increases—does it demand trade union control of prices and distribution of food. In other words, the most pressing immediate needs of the workers are not included in the CNT-UGT program of action. It becomes a primary duty of the revolutionists in both organizations to demand inclusion of these points in the program.

Unity Machinery Weak

2. The apparatus established to carry out the pact is hopelessly narrow and weak. The national contact committee is ridiculously small and limited to purely advisory capacities. Likewise the local contact committee are so completely subordinated to the national set-up as to be deprived of all initiative. A really serious attempt at united action of the proletariat must send roots into every factory, village and regiment of UGT-CNT members. Moreover, the organized workers must take the lead in drawing into the united movement the many millions of workers and peasants still unaffiliated; and this can only be done by providing for their participation in electing the contact committees. This means that the contact committees must be democratically elected by all the workers in each factory, village and regiment. There is no other effective method for uniting the deepest layers of the masses with the advance guard. These democratically elected contact committees, linked together in local, regional and a national council, would so indubitably represent the masses, that the Stalinists could go against them only at the cost of losing the allegiance of such workers and peasants as the Stalinists' ranks include. The network of contact committees would put an end to the repressions and the counter-revolutionary schemes of the bourgeoisie, as the present weak apparatus of the united front cannot.

The anarchist and socialist prejudices against this really comprehensive form of united front of the proletariat must be overcome by the determined and persuasive propaganda of the revolutionary elements. Here is the basic task of the genuine revolutionist! Beginning as instruments for defending the immediate interests of the workers, the democratic organs of the united front become the arena in which revolution and reform contend for the leadership of the masses; and, when the revolutionists prevail, become the organs of power and the foundations of the workers' state.

In these possibilities, rather than in its present program and structure, is the real significance of the UGT-CNT pact. Bourgeois-Stalinist hostility, already expressed, will intensify all the more, if the united front tends to develop the form of soviets. But in unity the workers will find the strength to repel repression and gather the workers and peasants in a single democratic structure.

Consistent Party Lacking

One thing is still lacking: the organized revolutionary force which will, single-mindedly, tirelessly, fight to open this road and clear it of all obstructions.

As always, so now in Spain, the problem of the revolution is the problem of the revolutionary party. But a year of civil war, in which every day has concentrated the lessons of months and even years, has crystallized the forces for the new party. The left wing of the POUM, which includes the majority in Barcelona and Madrid, stands on the program of soviets and workers' state power. The "Friends of Durruti", left wing in the CNT-FAI, persecuted by the government and disowned by the CNT, stands on a similar program. It is axiomatic that Caballero's new-found boldness must reflect a far deeper and more stable leftward swing in his ranks. Founded only a few months ago, the Bolshevik-Leninist group of the Fourth International, despite outlawry by the government, is finding roots in the masses. In the day by day struggle for the immediate needs of the workers, these revolutionary forces can be welded together into the party of revolution.

An extremely encouraging development is the growing volume of protest in the CNT press, and also in the left socialist organs, against the arrests of workers, particularly against the arrests of the POUM leaders. The protest campaign, unfortunately, got under way very slowly. Nin was arrested on June 15, his comrades in widespread raids during the following week; and on June 23 the government decreed the semi-fascist legal procedure under which they were to be tried: all anti-governmental activity is defined as espionage, to be prosecuted before Special Tribunals of civil and military judges chosen by the Ministers of Defense and Justice, in secret sessions! Apart from assigning their attorney, Pabon, to the defense, the CNT did almost nothing for nearly a month. Finally the National Committee of the CNT formally undertook their defense, and Federica Montseny, ex-cabinet minister, gave to the masses the first inkling of Nin's fate in a mass-meeting speech in which she charged he had been murdered by the Stalinists.

CNT Press Protests Frame-Up

The trials against the POUM are the touchstone of the character of the government, declares the anarchist press. CNT of Madrid (July 29) declares:

"We must begin by saying that we believe and will continue to believe them to be revolutionaries, men like Nin, Andrade, Rovira, Arguer, etc., who for so many years have demonstrated before the Spanish proletariat that they know how to fight worthily for the interests of the working class. We will continue believing in their rectitude and in their political decency, in the same way that we believe in the spiritual grandeur of Francisco Ferrer, in spite of an enormous pile of legal folios by which the Bourbon monarchy presented him as an enemy of Spain and an evil monster."

The censorship, of course, prevented publication of the story of the lynching of Andres Nin. The anarchist press has, as a substitute, taken to pointedly asking the government: "Where is Andres Nin?"

"The fact that the POUM could mobilize in Catalonia alone ten thousand fighters against fascism was no obstacle to their being called 'fascist advance

guard' by the perennial factionalists," says CNT. It sardonically contrasts the fact that fascist officers were tried by the Popular Tribunals, while the POUM prisoners are to be tried under the decree of June 23. The anarchists recall Nin's three decades of service to the proletariat, beginning as a CNT leader; Gorkin and Andrade's twenty and more years, founders of the Comintern; David Rey's thirty years in the movement, ten spent in the prisons of the monarchy and republic, the eleventh in the prison of the present government, etc.

The defense campaign has had one immediate consequence. On July 30, the Ministry of Justice announced that the anti-fascist prisoners would be brought together in one prison, segregated from the fascist prisoners. Until then revolutionary leaders were put in the same cells with fascist officers! Does this change mean that the government is going to retreat from its previously avowed intention to try Andrade, Gorkin, and Rey together with a Falangist? Certainly, the official admission of the distinction between anti-fascist prisoners and the rest is an important concession.

The speed of political developments in Spain is truly extraordinary. Only three months ago, on May 17, ousting the UGT and CNT, the bourgeois-Prieto-Stalinist bloc took the reins of government. The Negrin cabinet seemed to be the "strong" power which would, once for all, liquidate the last vestige of the conquests of July 19th, break the backbone of the labor movement, re-establish completely the bourgeois order, and having thus reassured Anglo-French imperialism, secure from them sufficient material and diplomatic support to force an armistice, out of which would issue united bourgeois republic. The Negrin government seemed well on its way to this end when it succeeded in outlawing the POUM, kicking the CNT out of the Catalan government, arresting hundreds of key militants, establishing rigid police control of Catalonia, foisting its officers on the militias, establishing a minute political censorship on the CNT and UGT press. The CNT and UGT put up little opposition to their expulsion from the government and the ensuing reactionary steps; apparently they were paralyzed by the hope that the Negrin cabinet would succeed in getting the help from the "great democracies" which had been denied to the Caballero government, and that it would, consequently, carry on the war more successfully than its predecessor.

Negrin Cabinet Shows Incompetence

But three months of the Negrin cabinet have demonstrated its incapacity to carry on the war. The "great democracies" continue to collaborate with the Italo-German bloc in depriving anti-fascist Spain of arms. They will aid the loyalist side only when the loyalist side becomes almost indistinguishable from Franco in its class character. They fear the effect of victories upon the morale of the workers and peasants. Even more important, the Negrin government has proved unable to utilize the materials and man power at its disposal. As it weeded out the proletarian officers and gave more and more power to the bourgeois bureaucracy and gen-

eral staff, more and more acts of sabotage and outright treachery occurred.

Bilbao fell intact into Franco's hands, though it is an elementary axiom of military science that well-armed troops cannot be driven from a city until its buildings are razed to the ground. The same thing has now happened to the manufacturing town of Reinos, key to Santander's defenses. The promised offensives on the Madrid, Teruel and Aragon fronts, to relieve Santander, have not materialized. The "government of victory" has failed even more miserably than its predecessor. In this lies the explanation for the new-found resurgence of CNT-UGT opposition.

The CNT press abounds in warnings against illusions about aid from England and France, although the CNT leaders have not entirely freed themselves from that illusion: the very manifesto of July 17 addressed to the world proletariat declaring, "For us, the revolutionaries of Spain, there is only one salvation: your aid", includes in its slogans one perfectly acceptable to the Stalinists: "Put pressure on your governments to adopt decisions favorable to our struggle." It is obvious that a single friendly gesture from France would cause the anarchists to revert to the illusions which have so undermined the prosecution of the war. Their present skepticism, however, drives them to demand intensified mobilization of the internal resources of Spain.

Araquistain "Disillusioned"

The same motives galvanize the Caballero forces. Luis Araquistain, Caballero's theoretician, writes in *Adelante* of Valencia, July 18: "We have counted too much, in illusion and hope, on the London [non-intervention] Committee; that is to say, on the aid of the European democracies. Now is the hour to realize that we can expect nothing decisive from them in our favor, and from one of them much against us, at the least. On this conception we must base our foreign policy." To realize how new his language is to Araquistain, one must read again the statements which he made, as Ambassador to France, until the middle of May. Then he expected not only Anglo-French aid, but amicable collaboration with Italy.

Interviewed by *Le Petit Journal* at the beginning of April, Araquistain said: "Mussolini, who is a thorough realist not frightened by words, should not be frightened by fantasies such as that of a Bolshevik utopia in Spain... He has forgotten that there is no reason to suppose that republican Spain after the war would adopt toward Italy a policy different from that prior to the war." "The arts of peace, of diplomacy, are methods of international attraction which work to better advantage than war."

Araquistain trusted that Mussolini "would quickly overcome the bitterness" produced by the Guadalajara defeat. In three months, however, events have driven Araquistain to a more realistic position. That he and Caballero will maintain it, one may be permitted to doubt, considering their record. But revolutionaries can utilize it as a point of departure from which to win the masses for a consistently revolutionary prosecution of the war against fascism.