

SOCIALIST APPEAL

VOL. 1. No. 10. Saturday, October 10, 1937
 Published every week by the
 SOCIALIST APPEAL PUBLISHING ASS'N.
 Published at 116 University Place, N. Y.
 Subscriptions: \$2.00 per year; \$1.00 for 6
 months. Foreign: \$2.50 per year. Bundle order
 3 cents per copy. Single copies 5 cents.
 All checks and money orders should be made
 out to the Socialist Appeal.
 Application for entry as second class matter
 is pending.

The A. F. of L. Convention

Three outstanding conclusions may be drawn from a preliminary view of the first week's sessions of the A. F. of L. Convention.

First: The events of the last year, national and international, have brought not the slightest change in the bitterly reactionary policies of the A. F. of L. officialdom. The hardened class collaborationism of the firmly entrenched bureaucrats expresses itself quite openly and brazenly in the Convention speeches, with their appeals for "employer cooperation" and their protestations of the "responsibility" and "respectability" of A. F. of L. unions. The key questions of the Convention are being settled in the classic bureaucratic manner: with the central aim of protecting and securing the position and privileges of the bureaucracy itself.

Second: In spite, however, of this thoroughly reactionary class-collaborationism, the social position of the bureaucrats, which depends upon their keeping together and loyal to them a movement of organized workers, compels them to take certain steps and put forward certain ideas which are in the interests of the workers. For example, the criticism of the recent tendencies of the labor movement to rely more and more upon government boards and "government interference", though motivated primarily for the A. F. of L. officials by hostility to the C.I.O. and jealousy at the C.I.O.'s comparative success in getting the ear of the government agencies, nevertheless contains much that is sound. Several of the speeches at Denver, whatever may have caused them, pointed out quite correctly the grave dangers to the independent strength of the labor movement which result from over-reliance upon the government.

It should never be forgotten that, however reactionary the A. F. of L. bureaucrats may be, they are professional trade unionists; and thus, in their own way, must guard and defend the trade unions which they lead. However unsatisfactory their way may be from a revolutionary point of view, however fatal in the long run, it is nevertheless preferable from a trade union standpoint to the policies of those who, like the Stalinists, utilize the trade union movement merely and only as a weapon in their own reactionary political schemes, and who are for that reason completely irresponsible toward the basic interests of the trade union itself.

Third: Lastly, the Denver Convention makes clear that the A. F. of L. is not dead, nor even dying. For good or for ill, the A. F. of L. still lives, and is stronger this year than last. The belief of those who thought that the day of the Federation was ended, that the C. I. O. movement would sweep it aside and leave only a pitiful fragment at most, is proved by experience to be unfounded. More than 3,000,000 workers are enrolled in the Federation, and for the most part its unions are more firmly and solidly organized than many of those of the C. I. O. Since the failure of the Little Steel strikes this Spring, just prior to which the A. F. of L. reached its lowest comparative point with reference to the C. I. O., the balance has undoubtedly been swinging back somewhat in favor of the A. F. of L.

If we ask why it is that the C. I. O., which unquestionably represents a movement historically more progressive than the A. F. of L., at least in its policies of industrial unionism and organization of the mass industries, failed in this first test to take over complete hegemony of the American labor movement and to sweep aside the A. F. of L. proper, there are a number of factors which must be taken into account in the answer:

The most basic consideration is doubtless the fact that the present stage of the development of American economy still leaves an economic foundation for obsolete craft organization. The "rationalization" of many forms of economic life has not yet reached a point where the policy of industrial unionism is as warmly welcomed as it is, for example, in the mass production industries.

(Continued on page 9)

Aragon Front Veteran Tells of Sabotage of Anti-Fascist Fight By People's Front Government

By Harry Milton

The Daily Worker of October 6th carried an article written by Robert Minor, American Stalinist at present acting as a special correspondent in Spain.

He refers to irrefutable evidence to prove the connection between the "Trotskyist" POUM and Franco-Hitler-Mussolini and how the POUM General, Kopp, of the Lenin Division had brought enormous supplies of arms and ammunitions across no man's land to the Fascists, and how the POUM officers used to meet regularly with the Fascist General Staff in preparation for the opening up of the front simultaneously with the attempt to seize possession of Barcelona during the May days and turn the city over to the Fifth Column and Mussolini's marines who were to land from ships lying outside the harbor.

When I first arrived at Sietimo, the divisional headquarters of the POUM army at the Huesca front, we were kept there more than a week without proceeding to the front. We knew the front lines were short of men and we could not understand why we were kept in Sietimo. Some hundreds of the Spanish volunteers had been waiting for more than two weeks and it was only after some days that I learned why we were kept in Sietimo.

Deprived of Rifles

We were kept in Sietimo because the Division Lenin had no rifles to give us. Incredible as it is the POUM army of some 9000 men had absolutely no reserves of arms or ammunition to arm the new recruits. We simply had to wait behind the lines until there were a sufficiently large number of dead, wounded or men going on leave before we could proceed to the front.

I got my gun and was attached to the Independent Labor Party contingent, La Granja sector. It was here that I learned the actual state of affairs regarding the armaments of the POUM.

When Franco attempted to seize the power on July 19th the Azana government was left without an army or a police force. The workers armed themselves against the wishes and in opposition to the Azana government, who were more afraid of the revolutionary workers than they were of the Fascists and stopped them dead in their tracks. They organized a new revolutionary army, the workers' militias. In Catalonia they succeeded in driving the Fascists completely out of Catalonia and half through the province of Aragon to the very gates of Huesca and Saragosa.

When the Anarchists agreed to confine the struggle against the Fascists simply to the preservation of bourgeois democracy, in return for the military aid they got from the Stalinist bureaucracy the Caballero government inspired by the Spanish Stalinists began the systematic sabotage of the Aragon front which was held by a crushing majority of Anarchists and POUM militias. Although the administrative control of the workers militias were in the hands of the

Anarchist and POUM organizations the fundamental military policy and strategy were determined by the Madrid-Valencia and Catalanian governments whose entire policy was based on the destruction of the militias and the creation of a new army organized and controlled by the government. Had the order for a general offensive been given on the Aragon front it would have been the Anarchist and POUM militias who would have had to carry out the operation and it would have been necessary to supply these workers' militias with all the necessary armaments required for such an operation. The success of such an offensive would have fallen to the Anarchist and POUM soldiers and it would have been extremely difficult to popularize the creation of the new army or to justify the liquidation of the militias. Most important of all it would have aroused a tremendous enthusiasm and revolutionary feeling among the workers. Rather than risk the slightest possibility of another revolutionary wave in the direction of the social revolution the order for a general offensive on the Aragon front was never given.

Not only was such an order never given but the workers' militias were criminally short of arms. Long before the middle of July when the militias were completely smashed or incorporated into the regular army the government, inspired by the Stalinists, pursued a deliberate, conscious policy of sabotage with regards to the workers' militias.

The army of the POUM consisted of some 9000 men. Several thousand of our men were armed with American Winchester rifles of the type Custer used on the Indians. These guns had been sold by Stalin to the Spanish government and given to the Anarchist and POUM militias. They were military junk. They had been used in the period of armed intervention in the Civil War in Russia and had been taken out of the army junkyards and sold by Stalin. It is needless to say that this military junk was paid for in cash, in gold and in advance. The rest of our men had long and short Mausers most of which were more than 30 years old. We were always short of ammunition and what we did have was bad. We had no small arms, and bayonets were not given us until late in April. We had no tanks, adequate heavy artillery, trench motors or aviation. Our machine guns were very few, very old and unreliable. What we did have was a lot of men who were revolutionists and who were ready to die rather than permit the fascists to advance.

Minor Lies

Robert Minor is as well aware of these facts as I am, he knows there is no evidence of any kind to prove any connection between the POUM which he calls Trotskyist (and which unfortunately never adhered to the principles of the Fourth International) and Franco. He knows he lies when he refers to Kopp, one of the POUM generals, as being an agent of Franco and of conferences that Kopp was supposed to have had with the Fascist general staff in no man's land.

PACIFISM AND CHINA

Answer to Journalist Devlin

By Leon Trotsky

The so-called peace organizations, including the working class organizations, do not in the least constitute an obstacle to the war. The numerous peace conferences, organized mainly by the Comintern, are purely theatrical enterprises without the least effectiveness; in time of war all these peace leaders, all these pious and humanitarian ladies and gentlemen, will return to their governments to support them in the war as they did in 1914-1918.

The only political factor which today hinders the outbreak of war is the fear, on the part of the governments, of the social revolution. Hitler himself has said it many times. We must draw the logical conclusions from this: the more revolutionary the working class, the more are these latter prevented from carrying out their designs to make a new division of the world by armed force.

At the same time we must carefully distinguish between the imperialist countries and the backward countries, colonial and semi-colonial. The attitude of the working class organizations in and towards these two groupings cannot be the same. The present war between China and Japan is a classic example. It is absolutely indisputable that, on the part of Japan, it is a war of rapine and that, on the part of China, it is a war of national defense. Only conscious or unconscious agents of Japanese imperialism can put the two countries on the same plane.

That is why we can only feel pity or hatred for those who, in the face of the Sino-Japanese war declare that they are opposed to all wars, to wars altogether. The war is already a fact. The working class movement cannot remain neutral in a struggle between those who wish to enslave and those who are enslaved. The working class movement in China, Japan and in the entire world must oppose with all its strength the Japanese imperialist bandits and support the people of China and their army.

No Confidence in Chinese Bourgeoisie

This does not at all suppose a blind confidence in the Chinese government and in Chiang-Kai-Shek. In the past, above all in 1925-27, the general was already dependent upon working class organizations in his military struggle against the Chinese generals of the North, agents of foreign imperialism. In the end, he crushed the working class organizations by armed force in 1927-28. We must learn the lessons from this experience which resulted from the fatal policies of the Comintern. In participating in the legitimate and progressive national war against Japanese invasion, the working class organizations must preserve their entire political independence of the Chiang Kai-shek government. The Communist Party of China again, as in 1924-25, is making violent efforts to turn over the Chinese working-class movement politically to Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. It is a crime all the more horrible because it is being committed for the second time.

At the same time, the remedy does not lie in the working class organizations declaring themselves "against all wars" and folding their arms in an attitude of passive treason, but rather in participating in the war, aiding the Chinese people materially and morally, and simultaneously educating the masses of peasants and workers in a spirit of total independence of the Kuomintang and its government. We do not attack Chiang Kai-shek for conducting the war. Oh, no. We attack him for doing it badly, without sufficient energy, without confidence in the people and especially in the workers.

A pacifist who has the same attitude towards China as towards Japan in this terrible conflict is like one who would identify a lockout with a strike. The working class movement is against a lockout of the exploiters and for a strike of the exploited. At the same time, strikes are often led by misleaders who are capable of betraying the working class movement during the strike. This is no reason for workers to refuse to participate in the strike but it is reason for mobilizing the working masses against the defections and the treason of the leadership. It often happens that during or after a strike the organized masses change their direction. This can very well happen in China. But this change can be favorable for the people only if the Chinese and international working class organizations support China against Japan.

Sept. 25, 1937.