

Arrest of 3 Loyalist Generals Shows Treason in People's Front Regimes

Stalinist Pogrom Against POUM Intensified to Cover Betrayal of Northern Front by Basque Bourgeoisie in the Valencia Government

By Felix Morrow

A few hours after the fall of Gijon, the Negrin government announced the forthcoming trial of three generals for treason leading to the fall of Malaga. Thereby hangs a tale.

Malaga fell on February 8. Immediately the CNT presented proofs that the defense had been directly, deliberately betrayed.

The first move of the bourgeois-Stalinist bloc was to attempt to make the CNT the scapegoat. Francisco Maroto, anarchist military leader, was arrested and not released for over a month.

The CNT had the goods, however, and as a result, on February 21, Under-Secretary of War General Jose Asensio, his chief of staff, Cabrera, and Colonel Villalba whom Asensio had sent to Malaga on the eve of its fall were imprisoned awaiting trial. The Caballero cabinet soon gave way to Negrin. Now, nearly six months after the Negrin cabinet came in, a trial is again announced.

Reason For Trial

Why such a trial should be spotlighted now, is quite clear. A series of open betrayals has wiped out the northern front. The masses demand action against the traitors. But a trial of those associated with the fall of Bilbao, Santander, Reinoso, Gijon, would lead directly to the doors of the present government. Desperately seeking a way out of this predicament, the government turns to the Malaga affair, which happened during Caballero's ministry.

Certainly, it would be possible in such a trial to compromise Caballero's Ministry of War. The CNT can testify that twice, in October and November, delegations vainly urged Caballero to strengthen the defense of Malaga. The Stalinist, Colonel Romero, can tell the story of fascist air attacks at will because no anti-aircraft guns were provided. Asensio's subsequent refusal to supply arms to Malaga and his appointment of the traitor Villalba—who had been previously arrested by CNT troops on the Aragon front as a fascist—certainly reflect on his superior, Caballero. In a carefully managed trial, the government might make Caballero the scapegoat and thus seek to turn attention away from the northern betrayals and the cold and plain fact that in six months the government has provided only defeats.

Nevertheless, I predict that, if the trial is held at all, it will be a secret one, on the pretext that military secrets are involved. For if the CNT militiamen go on the witness stand and are not muzzled either by the judges or by the CNT leaders "in the name of unity", they can add a number of highly embarrassing facts leading straight to the doors of the present cabinet.

Prieto and Navy

Above all, they can point to Prieto, then as now head of the navy. Malaga is the nearest port to Franco's communications lines with Morocco. It was the obvious place for the loyalist fleet to be, and the Italians and Moors could then never have taken Malaga.

But—as the Italian anarchists, Camillo Berneri, in a letter attacking the collaboration of the CNT with the bourgeoisie, pointed out—Prieto's deliberate disuse of the fleet was part of bourgeois-Stalinist policy of Anglo-French orientation. "The great democracies" feared that a loyalist clash in the Mediterranean would hurt their imperialist interests, and therefore persuaded Prieto to hang up the navy at Cartagena for the duration of the war!

Furthermore, in December a decree had established the Supreme War Council, in which the bourgeois-Stalinist bloc had a majority as against the CNT-UGT ministers. Where was the Council while Malaga was being betrayed?

Furthermore, such a trial would have to air the story of Antonio Guerra, Stalinist delegate in the Malaga Military Command. His whereabouts, had remained a mystery until a fierce controversy between the Stalinist and CNT leaders provoked the latter (CNT Boletin, Valencia, August 26, 1937) to remind the C.P. that Guerra had stayed behind with the fascists. Moreover, the Stalinist, War Commissar Bolivar, had been with Villalba at the Commander's Headquarters and had deserted with him, two days before the city fell—the undoubted betrayal for which Villalba is to be tried. These are but a few of the facts which make extremely doubtful a real court airing.

POUM Trial Fiasco

The POUM leadership has been

in jail since June 16. Why are they not tried, even under the *ex post facto* decree of June 23 which provides secret trials? After four months, the Stalinists are still trying to sweat someone into a confession. To cover up this fiasco, and to provide the atmosphere for shooting them without trial, stories continue to appear about "new discoveries" of POUM-Franco plots. The Daily Worker's latest (October 25) from Valencia reports that an assassination-sabotage-espionage plot "was frustrated by the arrest last night of a gang of Franco spies, including leaders and members of the POUM, the Catalonian Government announced to the press last night." All that's false in Joe North's story is:

1. Not the Catalonian government, but the police chief of Barcelona, announced the arrests. This distinction has its significance: The police chief is a direct appointee of Valencia, which under the Catalan autonomy statute's provision, took over control of public order in Catalonia on May 5 and despite the lapse of six months still keeps that control, thus wiping out any real Catalan autonomy. Furthermore, the director-general of police for all Spain is the Stalinist, Moron, and his Barcelona chief is the Stalinist, Burillo. Burillo is beloved of the masses, notably for being an ex-member of the Spanish Monarchical Union and for having, as chief of operations at Toledo, surrendered intact to the fascists the important munitions factory there.

2. The very much pro-People's Front Madrid bureau of the New York Times, which avidly repeats most Stalinist slanders, makes no mention of POUM members in the arrests (October 24 issue).

3. All the POUM leaders of Barcelona are dead, jailed or—very few—have fled from the country.

Laugh at Charges

4. Apart from the Stalinists, the Catalan government is constituted by President Companys and his Esquerra colleagues, who have publicly protested against the slander that the POUM leaders are Franco agents. Companys sent the head of the Commissariat of Propaganda, Jaime Miravittles to intervene in Va-

lencia on behalf of Nin. When the Stalinists showed him the alleged documentary proof—references to "N" in a "document"—Miravittles burst out laughing, by his own account, and declared that nobody would take it seriously. As a matter of fact, only the Stalinists reiterate the preposterous charge against the POUM leaders. Even Prieto told the ILP French delegation that he did not believe the POUM leaders had any relations with fascists. The liberal bourgeoisie and the right wing socialists are prepared to prosecute the POUM as "insurrectionaries", i.e., as revolutionists! The Stalinists cannot be as honest as Prieto, and must transform the revolutionists into fascists!

Bureaucracy Adopts Barbaric Penal Code to Punish Smallest Offenses in Russia

By Victor Serge

Barbarism. Is there a word more correct to characterize this frightful social back-sliding? Judge for yourself.

Tass, the official newspaper agency, announces from Moscow that long terms at forced labor have been re-established by decree for the "wreckers". This type of penalty was abolished at the beginning of the revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat made remarkable advances in the field of labor legislation even in the very midst of the civil war. The Council of People's Commissars, presided over by Lenin, decreed that the longest penalty depriving a defendant of his liberty shall not extend beyond five years. The absurd and degrading inhumanity of perpetual or quasi-perpetual penalties in civilized society, was thus abolished. Later on, the maximum penalty was increased to ten years. Beginning with October 3, it has been extended to twenty-five years!

Dispatches on the same day apprise us that the Siberian authorities, in order to combat "hoodlumism", have decided to institute the death penalty for

this crime and that as a result, some 35, in two groups, have been shot. Crimes ascribed to "hoodlums" or hooligans, are regarded in every other country as minor offenses usually punished with short jail sentences or fines. From the social point of view, they are due to a lack of education, or improper supervision of adolescents, alcoholism and poverty.

Soviet penal law is thus becoming the most inhuman in existence. It is the only penal law in the world which applies the death penalty to minors, the death penalty for theft, the death penalty for crossing the frontier without a passport; the obligatory deportation of the families of those condemned to heavy sentences; imprisonment for inverts.

KARAKHAN

From a personal source I have been informed with certainty that Karakhan, who was one of the first Soviet diplomats, serving as ambassador in China and in Turkey, has been shot. Previously, it had been ascertained that he had disappeared. My informants are categorical on this subject.

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—James T. Farrell, in the Saturday Review of Literature.