

The Lesson of Spain--the Last Warning :-: By Leon Trotsky

(Continued from last issue)

Instead of this the Anarcho-syndicalists, attempting to hide themselves from "politics" in the trade unions, proved to be, to the great surprise of the whole world and themselves, the fifth wheel in the cart of bourgeois democracy. But not for long: no one needs a fifth wheel. After Garcia Oliver and Co. helped Stalin and his collaborators to take the power away from the workers, the anarchists themselves were driven out of the government of the People's Front. Even then they found nothing better to do than to run behind the chariot of the victor and assure him of their devotion. The fear of the petty bourgeois before the big bourgeois, of the petty bureaucrat before the big bureaucrat, they covered up by lachrymose speeches about the holiness of the united front (between the victims and the executioners) and about the inadmissibility of every kind of dictatorship, including their own. "But we could have taken power in July 1936. . . ." "But we could have taken power in May 1937. . . ." The anarchists begged Negrin-Stalin to recognize and reward their treachery to the revolution. A disgusting picture!

This self-justification alone: "We did not capture power not because we could not but because we did not wish to, because we are against every kind of dictatorship" and the like, contains in itself an irrevocable condemnation of Anarchism as a fully anti-revolutionary doctrine. To renounce the conquest of power means voluntarily to leave the power with those who have it, i. e. the exploiters. The essence of every revolution consisted and consists in the fact that it puts a new class in power and thus gives it the opportunity to realize its own program. It is impossible to lead the masses towards insurrection, without preparing for the conquest of power. No one could have hindered the anarchists after the conquest of power from establishing such a regime as they consider necessary, if, of course, their program is realizable. But the Anarchist leaders themselves lost belief in this. They hid from power not because they are against "every kind of dictatorship"—in actuality, grumbling and whining, they supported and support the dictatorship of Negrin-Stalin, —but because they completely lost their principles and courage, if in general they had ever possessed them. They were afraid of Stalin. They were afraid of Negrin. They were afraid of France and England. More than anything did these phrase-mongers fear the revolutionary masses.

The renunciation of conquest of power throws every workers' organization into the mire of reformism and turns it into a plaything of the bourgeoisie: it cannot be otherwise in view of the class structure of society. To oppose the aim: the conquest of power, the anarchists could not in the end fail to be against the means: the revolution. The leaders of the C. N. T. and F. A. I. helped the bourgeoisie not only to hold on to the shadow of power in July, 1936, but to re-establish bit by bit what it had lost at one stroke. In May, 1937, they sabotaged the uprising of the workers and by that token saved the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Thus anarchism which wished to be anti-political proved in reality to be anti-revolutionary, and in the more critical moments—counter-revolutionary.

The Anarchist theoreticians, who after the great test of 1931-37, repeat the old reactionary nonsense about Kronstadt and affirm: "Stalinism is the inevitable result of Marxism and Bolshevism" simply demonstrate by this that they are forever dead for the revolution. You say that Marxism is in itself depraved and Stalinism is its legitimate progeny? But why do we, revolutionary Marxists, find ourselves in mortal combat with Stalinism throughout the world? Why does the Stalinist gang see in Trotskyism its chief enemy? Why does every approach to our view or to our methods of action (Durruti, Andres Nin, Landau and others) compel the gangsters of Stalinism to resort to bloody reprisals? Why, on the other hand, were the leaders of Spanish Anarchism, during the time of the Moscow and Madrid crimes of the G. P. U., ministers under Caballero-Negrin, i. e., servants of the bourgeoisie and Stalin? Why even now under the pretext of fighting fascism, do the anarchists remain voluntary captives of Stalin-Negrin, i. e., of the

executioners of the revolution who have demonstrated their incapacity to fight fascism? The lawyers of Anarchism, hiding behind Kronstadt and Makhno, will deceive nobody. In the Kronstadt episode and in the struggle with Makhno we defended the proletarian revolution from the peasant counter-revolution. The Spanish Anarchists defended and defend bourgeois counter-revolution from the proletarian revolution. No kind of sophism will erase from history the fact that Anarchism and Stalinism in the Spanish revolution were on one side of the barricades and the working masses with the revolutionary Marxists—on the other. Such is the truth which will forever remain in the consciousness of the proletariat!

THE ROLE OF THE POUM

Not much better is the record of the POUM. Theoretically it tried, it is true, to base itself on the formula of the permanent revolution (that is why the Stalinists called the POUMists Trotskyists).

But a revolution is not satisfied with theoretical avowals. Instead of mobilizing the masses against the reformist leaders, including the Anarchists, the POUM tried to convince these gentlemen of the advantage of socialism over capitalism. On such a pitch-pipe were tuned all the articles and speeches of the leaders of the POUM. In order not to quarrel with the Anarchist leaders they did not build up their nuclei and in general did not conduct any kind of work inside the CNT. Evading sharp conflicts, they did not carry on revolutionary work in the republican army. Instead of this they built "their own" trade unions and "their own" militia which guarded "their own" buildings or occupied "their own" part of the front. Isolating the revolutionary vanguard from the class, the POUM weakened the vanguard and left the class without leadership. Politically, the POUM remained throughout immeasurably nearer to the People's Front, whose left wing it covered, than to Bolshevism. If the POUM nevertheless fell victim to bloody and base repressions it was because the People's Front could not fulfill its mission of stifling the socialist revolution except by cutting off, piece by piece, its own left flank.

Despite its intentions, the POUM proved to be, in the final analysis, the chief obstacle on the road to the creation of a revolutionary party. The platonic or diplomatic defenders of the Fourth International who, like the leader of the Dutch Revolutionary Socialist Party, Sneevliet, demonstratively supported the POUM in its half-way measures, indecisiveness, evasiveness, in a word, in its centrism, took upon themselves the greatest responsibility. Revolution does not tolerate centrism. Revolution exposes and crushes centrism. In passing, it compromises the friends and lawyers of centrism. That is one of the chief lessons of the Spanish revolution.

THE PROBLEM OF ARMING

The Socialists and Anarchists who tried to justify their capitulation to Stalin by the necessity of paying for the Moscow arms with principles and conscience simply lie and lie unskillfully. Of course, many of them would prefer to disentangle themselves without murders and frame-ups. But every aim demands corresponding means. Beginning with April 1931, i. e., long before the military intervention of Moscow, the Socialists and Anarchists did what they could to throttle the proletarian revolution. Stalin taught them how to carry this work to a conclusion. They became criminal accomplices of Stalin only because they were his political co-thinkers.

If the leaders of the Anarchists had resembled revolutionists at all, they would have answered the first blackmail from Moscow not only by continuing the socialist advance but by disclosing Stalin's counter-revolutionary conditions before the working class of the world. Thus they would have forced the Moscow bureaucracy to choose openly between socialist revolution and the dictatorship of Franco. The Thermidorian bureaucracy fears and hates revolution. But it also fears to be stifled in a fascist ring. Besides this it depends on the workers. Everything speaks for the fact that Moscow would have been forced to supply arms and, pos-

sibly, at a more reasonable price.

But the world is not limited to Stalinist Moscow. During a year and a half of civil war the Spanish war industry could and should have been strengthened and developed, adapting a series of non-military factories to the purposes of war. This work was not carried out only because Stalin and equally with him his Spanish allies feared the initiative of the workers' organizations. A strong military industry would have become a powerful instrument in the hands of the workers. The leaders of the People's Front preferred dependence upon Moscow.

It is precisely on this question that the perfidious role of the "People's Front" was strikingly exposed; it thrust upon the workers' organizations the responsibility for the treacherous agreement of the bourgeoisie with Stalin. So long as the anarchists were in the minority they could not, of course, immediately hinder the ruling bloc from assuming whatever obligations they pleased toward Moscow and the masters of Moscow: London and Paris. But they could and they should have, without ceasing to be the best fighters on the front, openly kept clear from the betrayals and betrayers; explained the real situation to the masses; mobilized them against the bourgeois government; increased the forces from day to day in order in the end to conquer power and with it the Moscow arms.

And what if Moscow, in the absence of a People's Front, should in general refuse to give arms? And what, we answer to this, if the Soviet Union in general did not exist in the world? Revolutions have been victorious up to this time not at all thanks to great foreign patrons who supplied them with arms. Usually the counter-revolution enjoyed foreign patronage. Must we recall the experience of the intervention of French, English, American, Japanese and other armies against the Soviets? The proletariat of Russia won over inner reaction and foreign intervention without military support from the outside. Revolutions succeed, in the first place, with the help of a bold social program which gives to the masses the possibility of seizing weapons that are on their territory, and disorganizing the army of the enemy. The Red Army seized French, English and American military provisions and drove the foreign expeditionary corps into the sea. Has this really been forgotten already?

If at the head of the armed workers and peasants, i. e. at the head of the so-called "republican" Spain there were revolutionists and not cowardly agents of the bourgeoisie, the problem of arming would in general not have played a paramount role. The army of Franco including the colonial Riffs and the soldiers of Mussolini are not at all immune to revolutionary contagion. Surrounded from all sides by the fire of the socialist uprising, the soldiers of fascism would have proved to be an insignificant quantity. Not arms and not military "geniuses" were lacking in Madrid and Barcelona; what was lacking was a revolutionary party!

THE CONDITIONS FOR VICTORY

The conditions for victory of the masses in a civil war against the army of exploiters in its essence are very simple.

- 1) The fighters of a revolutionary army should clearly be aware of the fact that they are fighting for their full social liberation and not for the re-establishment of the old ("democratic") forms of exploitation.
- 2) The workers and peasants in the rear of the revolutionary army as well as in the rear of the enemy should know and understand the same thing.
- 3) The propaganda on their own front as well as on the front of the adversary and in both rears should be completely permeated with the spirit of social revolution. The slogan: "first victory, then reforms," is the slogan of all oppressors and exploiters beginning with the Biblical kings and ending with Stalin.
- 4) Those classes and strata who participate in the struggle determine the policy. The revolutionary masses should have a government apparatus directly and immediately expressing their will. Only the Soviets of workers, soldiers and peasant deputies can act as such an apparatus.
- 5) The revolutionary army should not only announce but immediately carry out the more pressing

measures of social revolution in the provinces won by them: the expropriation of provisions, manufactured articles and other stores on hand and transferring them to the needy; the re-division of lodgings in the interests of the toilers and especially of the families of the fighters; the expropriation of the land and landowners' inventory in the interests of the peasants; the establishment of workers' control and of the soviet power in place of the former bureaucracy.

6) Enemies of the socialist revolution, i. e. exploiting elements and their agents, even when covering themselves with the mask of "democrats", "republicans", "socialists" and "anarchists" should be mercilessly driven out from the army.

7) At the head of each military unit there should stand a commissar possessing the irrefragable authority of a revolutionist and a warrior.

8) In every military unit there should be a tempered nucleus of the more self-sacrificing fighters, recommended by the workers' organizations. The members of this nucleus have but one privilege: to be the first under fire.

9) The commanding corps of necessity includes at first many alien and unreliable elements in its staff. A verification and selection of them should be carried through on the basis of military experience, the recommendations of the commissar and testimonials from the rank and file fighters. Simultaneously there should proceed an intense preparation of commanders drawn from the ranks of the revolutionary workers.

10) The strategy of civil war should unite the rules of military art with the tasks of the social revolution. Not only in the propaganda but in the military operations it is necessary to take into account the social composition of the different military units of the opponent (the bourgeois volunteers, the mobilized peasants, or as with Franco, the colonial slaves) and in choosing an operative line to take into consideration the social structure of the corresponding regions of the land (the industrial regions; the peasant regions, revolutionary or reactionary; the regions of the oppressed nationalities, etc.). Briefly: revolutionary policy dominates strategy.

11) The revolutionary government, as the executive committee of the workers and peasants, should be capable of winning full confidence of the army and of the toiling population.

12) The foreign policy should have as its chief aim the awakening of the revolutionary consciousness of the workers, the exploited peasants and oppressed nationalities of the whole world.

STALIN GUARANTEED THE CONDITIONS OF DEFEAT

The conditions for victory, as we see, are quite simple. In their aggregate they are called the Socialist revolution. There did not exist in Spain even one of these conditions. The basic reason is that there was not a revolutionary party. Stalin tried, it is true, to transfer to the soil of Spain, the outer forms of Bolshevism; the Politburo, commissar, nuclei, the GPU, etc. But he emptied these forms of their social content. He renounced the Bolshevik program and with it the Soviets as the necessary form of the revolutionary initiative of the masses. He placed the techniques of Bolshevism at the service of bourgeois property. In his bureaucratic limitedness he imagined that the "commissars" by themselves could guarantee victory. But the commissars of private property proved capable only of guaranteeing defeat.

The Spanish proletariat displayed first class military capacities. In its specific gravity in the economy of the country, in its political and cultural level it stood in the first day of the revolution not lower but higher than the Russian proletariat at the beginning of 1917. On the road to its victory, its own organizations stood as the chief obstacles. The commanding clique of the Stalinists, in accordance with its counter-revolutionary function, consisted of the hired agents, careerists, declassed elements and in general every kind of social refuse. The representatives of other workers' organizations—flabby reformists, anarchist phrase-mongers, helpless centrists

of the POUM—grumbled, groaned, wavered, maneuvered, but in the end adapted themselves to the Stalinists. As a result of their aggregate work the camp of social revolution—workers and peasants—proved to be subordinated to the bourgeoisie, more correctly to its shadow, void of individuality, spirit, life. There was no lack of heroism on the part of the masses and courage on the part of individual revolutionists. But the masses were left to themselves and the revolutionists remained disunited, without program, without plan of action. The "republican" military commanders occupied themselves more with crushing the social revolution than with winning military victories. The soldiers lost confidence in their commanders, the masses—in the government; the peasants stepped aside, the workers got tired, defeat followed defeat, the demoralization grew. All this was not difficult to foresee from the beginning of the civil war. Taking as its task the rescue of the capitalist regime, the People's Front doomed itself to military defeat. Having turned Bolshevism on its head, Stalin with full success played the role of the grave-digger of the revolution.

Incidentally, the Spanish experience again demonstrates, that Stalin did not understand either the October revolution or the Civil War. His sluggish provincial thought lagged hopelessly behind the tempestuous course of events in 1917-1921. In those of his speeches and articles in 1917 where he expressed his own thought, his later Thermidorian "doctrine" was fully lodged. In this sense Stalin in Spain in 1937 is the Stalin of the March conference of the Bolsheviks in 1917. But in 1917 he merely feared the revolutionary workers; in 1937 he throttled them. The opportunist became the executioner.

"CIVIL WAR IN THE REAR"

But for victory over the governments of Caballero and Negrin a civil war would be necessary in the rear of the Republican army!—the democratic Philistine exclaims with horror. As if in Republican Spain even without this no civil war ever existed, and at that the base and most ignominious one, a war of the owners and exploiters against the workers and peasants. This uninterrupted war finds expression in the arrests and murders of revolutionists, the crushing of the mass movement, the disarming of the workers, the arming of bourgeois police, the abandoning of workers' detachments without arms and without help on the front, finally, in the artificial impeding of the development of the military industry. Each of these acts represents a severe blow to the front, direct military treason, directed by the class interests of the bourgeoisie. However, the "democratic" Philistines—including the Stalinists, Socialists and Anarchists—regard the civil war of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, even in the immediate rear of the front, as the natural and inevitable war, having as its task the safeguarding of the unity of the "People's Front". On the other hand, the civil war of the proletariat against the "republican" counter-revolution is, in the eyes of the same Philistines, a criminal. Fascist, Trotskyist war, breaking up. . . "the unity of the anti-fascist forces". Dozens of Norman Thomases, Major Atlees, Otto Bauers, Zyromskys, Malraux and petty traders of lies like Duranty and Louis Fischer spread this slavish wisdom along the face of the earth. At the same time the government of the "People's Front" moves from Madrid to Valencia, from Valencia — to Barcelona.

If, as facts bear witness, only the socialist revolution is capable of crushing fascism, then on the other hand a successful uprising of the proletariat is conceivable only when the ruling classes are caught in the grip of the greatest difficulties. However, the democratic Philistines invoke exactly these difficulties as proof of the impermissibility of the proletarian uprising. If the worker waited until the democratic Philistines showed him the hour of his liberation, he would forever remain a slave. To teach the workers to recognize reactionary Philistines under all their masks and to despise them independently of these masks is the first and chief duty of a revolutionist!

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