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Counter Revolution on the March

Camillo Berneri

5th May 1937

In the course of September 1930, Azana who was a member, with Zamora and Leroux, of the Provisional Government of the Republic, said at a meeting in Madrid, "We are going to conquer liberty by calling on all anti-monarchist forces, no matter what name they call themselves, no matter where they are." Such was the phrasing of the first 'holy alliance:' this alliance adopted as its political common denominator Republicanism. In August 1931 the Republic believed itself to be strong enough to precipitate the separation of the proletarian masses which were diverging from the government; the deportations of anarchists and syndicalists to the prisoner ships of Guinea were ordered by decree. 20th October 1931 the Cortes, including the Socialist deputies, voted in the Bill 'for the defence of the Republic' which was put into operation by repression of the anarcho-syndicalist movements. From 1932 onwards the pronunciamento of Seville showed that Republican Fascism is a greater danger than the monarchist restoration, but Azana, speaking in the Cortes of General Sanjurjo's attempted uprising, proclaimed that the Spanish Republic was not sick and

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“that it has purged itself of the scattered remnants of the old regime which it still contained.” In January 1933, Azana ordered the massacre of the insurgents at Casas-Viejas which was approved on 2nd February by 150 Socialist Deputies. In February 1936, in an interview in ‘Paris-Sou’, Azana stated that Lerroux and Gil Robles were liquidated; he declared, “We desire above all that order should prevail ... State it clearly, we do not want to make a revolution ... I want to govern legally. No dangerous innovations ... We want social peace, we desire order, we are moderates.’

After the Fascist insurrection had broken out, the Socialist and Communist parties returned to Azana’s phrase of September 1930: defence of the democratic, parliamentary Republic. They still persist in this position, opening up a route to counter-revolution.

Louis Pierard, Deputy in the Belgian Workers’ Party, recently recognised in ‘Regards’ that “Socialism was practically non-existent in Catalonia before the 19th July.” The UGT which had at that time 9,000 members in Catalonia, now has 50,000. Such a rapid expansion is significant. The UGT is drawing the middle class to it. The fish-merchants of Barcelona have joined this organisation en masse to avoid the ‘collectivisation of fish’ which figures in the CNT’s programme. What happened in Barcelona has occurred equally in all of Catalonia, in Aragon and in the Levant. The enemies of collectivisation of the land, of industry and of commerce have joined the UGT and the PSUC en masse. ‘Trebball,’ the mouthpiece of the PSUC, fights collectivisation and socialisation, while the CNT and POUM defend it. Henceforth, the union between the opportunist possibilism of the leaders of the PSUC and the bourgeois and petty bourgeois who have entered the Popular Front is evident. Already, in the course of the insurrection in Asturias, we have witnessed the rapid pseudo-revolutionary mimicry of the middle classes. When the Committee of Mieres called on employees, miners, foremen etc...., we witnessed the following

phenomenon, described in the 'Diary of a Miner' published by 'Giustizia e Liberta':

“Scarcely had they read the proclamation, than the right-wing elements rushed to put themselves under our command; they went so far as to argue among themselves, each one wanting to be first. Suspicious excess of zeal. They are the first to salute by raising their fist and to praise the Revolution when they greet workers. In exchange they receive rations of food, tobacco and other products, sometimes superior to those of the revolutionaries themselves. The proletarians are careless and generous like children.”

In contrast, the bourgeoisie display cleverness and hypocrisy, “above all when their life is at risk.” After 19th July in Catalonia, in Aragon and in the Levant this same phenomenon could be witnessed, but in this case to a far greater extent.

When the Spanish Communist Party published in August 1936 a manifesto signed by Jesus Hernandez, declaring that they were fighting solely for a democratic Republic, when the same party confirmed the same line of action on 15th December of the same year, this was not so much the external plutocracy of the 'democratic governments' which this organisation wished to reassure, but in fact the thousands of pseudo-neophytes who had infiltrated its ranks and those of the UGT. Even the United Youth Movement (JSU) disavowed Socialism; thus their Secretary General, Santiago Carrillo, was able to declare to the national congress of the JSU, which was held in Valencia on 15th January 1937, “We are not fighting for a Social Revolution. Our organisation is neither Socialist, not Communist .. . The JSU is not Marxist youth.” 'Ahora,' mouthpiece of the JSU supported this thesis, rejecting the class-based lines of policy.

The counter-revolutionary declarations which Juan Casanovas, President of the Catalan Parliament, made in the 'Depeche de Toulouse' last March, coincide with those of Comorera, a militant in the view of the PSUC, made last December. The elements of the Generalidad who, in October 1934, supported the autonomist-fascist putsch led by the triumvirate of Badia-Dencas-Mendez have not disappeared. More proof is furnished by the counter-revolutionary statements of Nicolau d'Olwer. 'Accion Catalana', the right of the PSUC, Galarza and his associates: there are the forces of the counter-revolution.

The Spanish Revolution finds itself caught between Burgos and Bilbao (where the Catholics, the Marxists and the Republicans establish their 'holy alliance' more and more by suspending the 'CNT del Norte' and imprisoning the Regional committee of the CNT). It is locked between Burgos and Valencia, where 218 adherents of the FAI and the Anarchist Youth (FIJL) are imprisoned and where the anarchist journal 'Nosotros' is persecuted. It is wedged between Burgos and Almeria where old man Moron held in prison one of the most heroic anti-fascist fighters: Francisco Maroto.

The shadow of Noske looms up. Monarchist-Catholic-traditionalist Fascism is only one sector of the counter-revolution. We must remember that. It must be said, We must not be a party to the manoeuvres of this great 'Fifth Column' whose tenacious vitality and redoubtable mimicry have been showed by six years of Spanish Republic.

The Spanish Civil War is developing on two politico-social fronts. The Revolution must triumph on two fronts. And it will overcome.