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Camillo Berneri

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Originally – What can we do?

24th October 1936

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1. To believe that, thanks to a policy of non-intervention, one can eliminate the possibility of an international armed conflict is to procrastinate while the problems worsen. It would permit Italy, Germany and Portugal to prepare themselves better for the war and allow the Spanish Fascist forces to lay in supplies of arms and munitions.

If Fascism were victor, France would be threatened in the south and the balance of forces in the Mediterranean would be permanently upset in favour of Italy and Germany who would emerge from this adventure stronger and more aggressive. Italy is seriously committed in Ethiopia, and Germany is in a very bad financial situation; do they want a war 'immediately?' No. They could go to war but they do not deliberately want a war straight away. If they wanted it, they would already have set it in motion in Spain. We therefore have

to adopt a forceful foreign policy, having as its basis Portugal which has eluded the control of Great Britain. Geneva is powerless. The only thing to do is therefore to break with Portugal by means of the following measures: the immediate expulsion of all Portuguese diplomatic representatives; immediate and complete closure of the border with Portugal; confiscation of all goods belonging to Portuguese capitalists resident in Spain.

As for Germany and Italy: the immediate expulsion of all their diplomatic representatives, suspension of the right of German airlines to fly over Spanish territory, the prohibition of all ships flying German or Italian colours from entering Spanish ports, the suspension of all immunity for bourgeois Germans and Italians residing in Spain.

Such a foreign policy would have as its immediate effect that of forcing Britain and France to adopt a definite position. If it were to give rise to the armed intervention of Italy and Germany, that intervention would at least be provoked now and not at the time chosen by these powers.

2. The operational base of the fascist army is Morocco. We must intensify our propaganda in favour of Moroccan autonomy throughout the pan-Islamic area of influence. We must dictate to Madrid unambiguous declarations announcing the abandonment of Morocco and the protection of Moroccan autonomy. France would anxiously envisage the possibility of insurrectionary repercussions in North Africa and in Syria; Great Britain would see the movements for self-rule in Egypt and among Arabs in Palestine growing stronger. We must exploit such anx-

ieties by means of a policy which threatens to unleash revolt throughout the Arab world.

For such a policy we need money and we need urgently to send agitators and organisers as emissaries to all the centres of Arab migration, into all the frontier zones of French Morocco. On the fronts in Aragon, the Centre, the Asturias and Andalusia a few Moroccans would be enough to fulfil the role of propagandists (through the radio, tracts, etc.).

3. Given our lack of arms and munitions, we must expand production on the spot by making use of foreign technicians, whose utilisation has been very badly organised; we must also rapidly create all the war industries possible and put an end to the wastage of munitions by giving far-reaching instructions and decisive orders.
4. We must achieve 'unity' just as much in the general and specific plan of the military operations which must be carried out on all fronts as in liaison among the commands of the areas by means of a General Staff controlled by a 'National Defence Committee.'
5. We must completely and without pity eliminate the Fascist remains
6. We must force Madrid to reconstitute immediately all the Spanish diplomatic corps which will have to be reformed with members chosen by the 'National Defence Committee.'