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# The Revolutionary Movement in Spain

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## INTRODUCTION

Two great anti-fascist revolts broke out in Spain in a comparatively short period of time. The anarcho-syndicalist uprising of December 1933, and the protest movement against the Lerroux government in October 1934 which started a wide spread mass strike all over Spain, led to numerous encounters between the workers and the armed forces, took the character of a separatist revolt in Catalonia, and developed into a magnificent revolutionary action in Asturias. Yet all these struggles were nothing but the climax of the severe social disturbances to which Spain has been uninterruptedly exposed for more than two years. One revolutionary uprising succeeded another. The Iberian peninsula resembled a volcano. Large scale mass actions bore testimony to a revolutionary workers' movement which was not satisfied with the republic. Foreign observers stated these facts time and again without, however, touching their real core or getting any nearer to an understanding of the truly vital question in Spain. The Spanish revolutionary movement differs radically in all its elements from the Socialist movements in other countries. Of course, one may draw parallels and make comparisons, but that does not exhaust the problem at hand. Only a knowledge of the origin of the revolutionary trends in the Spanish workers' movement and a study of their development, combined with a careful observation of the events from the fall of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship up to the present time will enable us to understand the *peculiarity* of the Spanish situation, to draw conclusions for the future, and to relate the revolutionary movement in Spain to the revolutionary tendencies of the workers' movement all over the world.

There is a saying that Africa starts on the other side of the Pyrenees. As a matter of fact, the Pyrenees form a very significant barrier. The ethnologic\* composition of the Iberian peoples is exceptionally strange. The peninsula has become a veritable melting pot of races. Throughout centuries war to the hilt has raged uninterruptedly in the different parts of the country. Dark and unknown is the origin of the Keltiberians, the first inhabitants of Iberia. The Basques are perhaps their last survivors. Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans came and mixed with the population; a great number of Jewish immigrants also became part and parcel of the population. The immigrations of the Goths and Vandals ended in Iberia; then the Arabs came from the South, overflowing the

\*) Ethnology: Science of the natural races and families of man.

country up to the Pyrenees, until they were thrown back, centuries later, by the Christian kings, whose imperialism attracted cultural and racial elements of the Central and South American peoples. The terrors of the inquisition initiated by these kings caused the cultural and economic decline of the country which has lasted into the present times and led to the emigration of large parts of the population.

The history, so crowded with radical changes and upheavals, plus the peculiar racial inheritance, accounts for the Spanish national psychology. In the fight against the violent and brutal Catholicism that conquered the country after the expulsion of the Arabs, there developed a strong trend towards independence and love of freedom.

Dreaminess, inclination towards phantasy, and a distinct feeling for human decency and dignity blend into a peculiar mixture that makes up the character of the Spanish people. *Individualism* is their real life element. This has its advantages and disadvantages. The country as a whole is lacking in economic initiative and intellectual productivity; laziness and indolence are a cancer in the body of the nation. As far as civilization is concerned the country is far behind other European countries. But it has preserved more of its originality. On the other hand, such outdated sentiments as human equality and justice not only find clear expression in the forms of social intercourse, but reach even deeper. The Spaniard may be poor but he does not give up his dignity. Even the beggar does not prostrate himself, but demands his human rights and addresses you as an equal when he asks you for a gift.

This heritage was taken over by the revolutionary workers' movement, which developed in the middle of the last century in Spain. It meant a new departure, the beginning of a progressive development. Its task was to mold into new forms all that was valuable in the national traditions, to stop any tendencies in the wrong direction, and to find its place in the international socialistic workers' movement.

## FIRST REVOLUTIONARY INFLUENCES

The great French revolution raised the cry for *freedom and equality*. The young bourgeoisie that soon became the ruling power, interpreted the demand for freedom according to its own class interests—it wanted freedom in commerce and trade, *freedom* to exploit others. The slogan of equality was soon dropped. Socialism, which rose shortly afterwards hesitated at first, then developed, in the most important countries, in the opposite direction; it was content with demanding equality, which to many of its adherents was nothing but uniformity, discipline, and the mechanical, "state-socialist" organization of all life. *Freedom* was, as Lenin put it, only

a bourgeois prejudice. But it was characteristic of the Spanish workers' movement that it tried from the beginning to defend a socialism of equality and freedom without sacrificing one of the basic demands to the other. It would have been impossible to gather the Spanish proletariat into strongly organized political parties as has been done in Central Europe, and to submit it to a severe discipline, the way the Socialist Party succeeded in Germany. Social Democracy and Maxism were able to invade Spain only at a comparatively late date, and until the 1920's, were not deeply rooted among the workers.

One of the most important theoreticians of Spanish liberalism, who, at the same time, blazed the trail for libertarian socialism in his country was Pi y Margall. He translated Proudhon into Spanish and thus acquainted the Spanish worker with the great anarchist thinker. Pi y Margall points time and again to the traditional character of the Spanish people, to their love for independence, their dislike of centralism: "Domestic peace is so hard to attain in Spain because there is no system of administration, of economic and financial policies that would not hurt the interests or views of some locality . . . Many of the old provinces have kept a character and language of their own which distinguish them from the others. Some have preserved their old regional privileges, others have civil laws that contradict entirely the conceptions of family and property in other parts of the country. There are provinces that are both industrial and agrarian in character, others that are purely agrarian . . . Almost all of them have a history and literature of their own. If the same yardstick were to be applied to all, discord would be perpetuated in Spain. Some provinces will flourish through the ruin of others. The unitarian state", Pi y Margall continues, "may perhaps do away with a few small disputes, but, on the other hand, it will destroy the seeds of life that God's own hand has sown in the various districts and regions of the country. The heterogeneity of the provinces gives life to the whole country but also causes its little quarrels; only *unity of the disparate parts* can do away with this evil—let us therefore organize our country on the basis of a federal republic."

These ideas are just as vital for Spain to-day as at the time when Pi y Margall expressed them. The dictatorial regimentation of Primo de Rivera went on the rocks. In October 1934, the Right started preparations for a new dictatorship, but even the reactionary Catalan bourgeoisie is turning against the too pronounced centralistic tendencies of the new regime.\* The Basque traditionalists and conservatives are turning against the Madrid reactionaries and demand autonomy for their region. These conflicts can no longer

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\* At the time this was written; late fall of 1934.

be settled by the *bourgeois-capitalist regime* in Spain. They will hasten *disintegration*. The fight for independence in the capitalist republic has turned into a business rivalry between the various regions, has become part of the economic competitive struggle.

The situation is entirely different when we turn to the revolutionary movement. Its hope for Spain is a *living, coordinated libertarian socialism*. Only when social equality is attained will the general demand for freedom acquire a meaning, will the free initiative of communities and regions have a real significance for the welfare of the whole country.

In 1840 the first labor unions were formed in Spain, following the ideas of Margall and Proudhon. In 1868 a decisive step towards a closer union was taken after the visit of Michael Bakunin's friend Fanelli to Madrid and Barcelona, where groups of the International Alliance of the Socialist Democracy and of the "International Workingmen's Association" were founded. (The I. W. M. A. existed since 1864). In 1870 all Spanish workers' organizations assembled for their first Congress which had a *decidedly anarchist-socialist program*. Nearly all leaders of the new movement supported the federalistic socialism of Pi y Margall but they disagreed with him on the class question. They stood for the active self-liberation of the proletariat, for the social revolution as advocated by the International Workingmen's Association. They differed from Pi y Margall in their attitude towards government methods and parliamentarism: the workers rejected both and professed to be for *organized direct action*. They demanded abolition of the state, which is not only the defender and protector, but also the creator of property and social prejudices. The program of the "Spanish Regional Federation of the International Workingmen's Association" demanded that "*the independent economic organizations of the workers, united on a federal basis, and not subject to any state or political party, take over production, reorganize distribution, and engage in the armed defense of the revolution.*"

In 1870, 30,000 workers were members of this organization; by 1873 there were 300,000. In the same year, they separated from the First International\* after the conflict between Marx and Bakunin and the great international controversy between Marxian state socialism and Bakunin's anti-authoritarian socialism. They belonged for years to the International Organization of Libertarian Socialist Groups, which had been founded at St. Imier after the Hague congress of the International.

During the first Spanish republic\*, the young movement fought valiantly for the cause of the workers, defied the bourgeois federalists and republicans and was suppressed after bloody conflict.

\*) i. e. the International Workingmen's Association.

\* 1873-1875.

The movement continued underground until 1882, when it was reorganized at a convention. Though continually persecuted, and suffering a terrible loss of lives and liberty, the anarchist, later the anarcho-syndicalist movement has continued up to the present day. The *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, founded in 1910, had a membership of 450,000 at the time of the Madrid convention in 1919, and beside that, 350,000 sympathizers had sent delegates. After Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the organization was built up again, starting with a membership of nearly 500,000. Since then the movement has suffered inconceivable persecutions and mass imprisonment, has been declared illegal in most parts of the country, even under the Leftist governments, but could not be eradicated. At a regional conference of Andalusia and Estremadura alone, in the summer of 1934, 180,000 members and 80,000 sympathizers sent delegates.

### ALLIANCE OF S. P. AND BOURGEOISIE AGAINST REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

The Spanish Socialist Party was founded in the seventies of the past century after a split in the Madrid group of the International Workingmen's Association. This group comprised nine members and did not grow larger for quite some time. During the next ten years trade unions were formed which adhered to the conceptions of the Socialist Party; their *Unión General de los Trabajadores* was founded, but developed very slowly. The party tried to take part in the elections of 1882, but it suffered utter defeat. It is interesting to take a look at its membership after fifty years of active propaganda: in 1915 there were 14,000 members, in 1921 a little over 45,000 in the whole country. In 1926, when Primo's military dictatorship changed into a civilian dictatorship, the party had six delegates in the Cortes; but they had only won their seats through coalition with the bourgeois republicans during the elections. At this time began the rise of the Socialist Party and the U. G. T. Largo Caballero, leader of the *Unión*, was appointed *Counsellor of State in the Ministry of Labor* by Primo de Rivera; the Socialist Party worked together with the Dictator. The U. G. T. submitted to the laws regulating the organization and activities of trade unions, sent its delegates to the government labor courts of arbitration and flourished. In the summer of 1931 its members numbered approximately 200,000. During elections for the legislative Cortes, in June 1931, the Socialist Party again did not come out as an independent class party, but was content with general "republican" slogans. It entered into a new coalition with the various bourgeois "Left" parties and got the largest number of seats in the Constituent Assembly. However, at the November elections

in 1933, the number of their deputies was cut in half. In 1931, three socialist ministers entered into the government of the republic, and there began the golden age of the Socialist Party and its unions (U. G. T.). The U. G. T. became a kind of government-sponsored union and received important privileges; tens of thousands of its functionaries got government jobs. The Socialist Party then made up for its failure in the past sixty years; it became a *mass organization* and, through the U. G. T., was able to influence directly the attitude of hundreds of thousands of workers. The cup of democracy was emptied with long draughts—to the bitter dregs.

The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera was to remedy several evils in the country; the increase in the *activities of the anarcho-syndicalist C. N. T.* frightened the bourgeoisie. The *separatism* of the regions, especially that of Catalonia, threatened to develop more and more. Beside that, the military clique was attacked because of the *Morocco adventure* which had cost the nation tens of thousands of lives. But during the seven years of the dictatorship, neither the revolutionary workers' movement nor the Catalanian regionalism could be destroyed. In 1930, the King had to drop Primo and replace him with General Berenguer. In the summer of the same year the bourgeois republicans and the socialists entered into the famous "Pact of San Sebastian" whereby they stipulated the division of the expected loot. The Socialist Party was promised three cabinet posts, which it later awarded to Prieto (Public Works), Caballero (Labor), and De Los Rios (Education). The anarcho-syndicalist Confederación was also asked to sign the pact and it was likewise offered ministries. It declined, but stated that it would fight for democratic liberties on the side of the people, *without taking part in a bourgeois republic.* And just this happened.

The young republic fell into the hands of a bourgeois-socialist coalition, which, except for the short presidency of Alcalá Zamoras\*, ruled the country for two years under Manuel Azaña. The government sought to solve several problems. The foremost was that of *agrarian reform.* Spain is a rural country. There are only two millions of industrial workers—their ranks, large during the period of war profits in industry, have been sharply reduced by several crises; while the number of farm laborers in the country amounts to over four and a half million. The largest and oldest industry is the textile industry, mainly located in Catalonia. The central part of the country, as well as Andalusia and Estremadura are in the hands of big landowners. Valencia and the North are settled mostly by small landowners, while in Catalonia the land is generally leased to small tenants (wine growers). The rural work-

\*) Since the proclamation of the Republic April 14, 1931 until the first reconstruction of the cabinet October 15, 1931.

C.D.H.S. - A.E.P

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ers have lived since ancient times in undescrivable misery. They seldom have enough to eat. The greatest part of the year they are unemployed, and during the harvest months they work under police supervision. The situation of most of the landowners is not a great deal different. Statistics divide the landed proprietors into the following groups: 845,000 small landowners earn only one peseta per day, either because they have not enough land or because it is very poor. 160,000 proprietors attain economic independence to a certain degree, because the whole family works very hard and reduces its wants to a minimum. The number of well-to-do peasants is estimated at 10,000, while most of the soil is in the hands of 9,000 landowners who squander its profits in the cities but have never done a stroke of work.

Another important problem that faced the new state was the *separation from the church*. The catholic clergy was gobbling up an enormous part of the budget. The schools were completely under their influence. Nothing was being done for a free, universal-educational system; nearly three-fourths of the population were illiterate. Any attempt to organize a secular school system had been blocked by the church. At the beginning of this century, the anarchist Ferrer had succeeded in creating a free school organization, which soon began to establish small free school groups all over the country. His organization was outlawed; the schools were closed. When the great anarcho-syndicalist uprising against the Moroccan war broke out in Barcelona, in 1909, Ferrer was imprisoned and executed as one of the instigators of the movement, though he had nothing to do with it; the catholic church in Spain was never loath to commit such crimes. Now, finally, its fateful political power was to be broken.

As to social reforms, the Azaña government aimed to *turn Spain into a copy of the "Weimar" Germany*. Wages and working hours were to be regulated by government bodies, strikes and direct action of the workers were looked upon as outlived remnants dating from the infancy of the social struggle and were to be abolished as such. The government also planned to introduce obligatory social and unemployment insurance, according to the Central European pattern.

But the new regime failed miserably. The Azaña-Prieto-Caballero government did not fulfill any of the many promises that had helped them to power. However, their policies were such as to help the waiting reactionaries into power! Gil Robles to-day enjoys in leisurely fashion the fruits of the republican policy of coalition. Aside from that, the Spanish revolution was a thorough anachronism: a "democratic" revolution in 1931 when the world was ready to scrap democratic illusions, and a last attempt to save the capitalist system by turning backward, towards state absolutism!



This experiment could not end any other way than it actually did. As the revolutionary workers' movement was not able, in 1931, to inspire a decisive part of the masses to push the revolution forward, the Socialists and the U. G. T. rose into power. This power they used to defeat their revolutionary competitors in the workers' movement and to widen the breach among the Spanish workers by resorting to every means of legislation and governmental violence. The revolutionary labor movement was systematically weakened and destroyed while at the same time the reformist law abiding workers were influenced against direct action. The results of this policy were the events of October 1934.

Only a small part of the program of the Azaña government was put into effect during its two years in office, but none of it was in favor of the working class.

The agrarian reform did not take any steps toward abolishing the large estates, but made provisions to gradually divide certain large tracts into small properties. The capital value of the land was to be credited to the former owners, and the new small landowners were to become economically dependent from the very beginning by having to pay interest to the big land-holders. Every vestige of socialist tendency was abandoned. Before the agrarian reform law was carried out, it was emasculated by numerous "reforms" of the law itself. The later governments which succeeded the socialist-republican coalition gradually divested the whole fabric of agrarian laws of its already innocuous contents.

The separation of church and state was partially carried through. A number of members of the Jesuit order were expelled, but the order itself continued to exist. Laws were promulgated for the secularization of education, all religious educational institutions were to abandon their ecclesiastical character. But the religious orders started to form private capitalistic organizations that took over the educational institutions. Thus, through many subterfuges, the church maintained its influence in the schools. The state did not have money enough to carry out its own program for building schools. Instead, it created a new shock police, the Guardia de Asalto, for the special purpose of suppressing the anarcho-sindicalists. The military budget of the republic was greater than that of the monarchy, the fight against illiteracy remained a dead letter.

The new Minister of Labor, Largo Caballero, became very active. His main achievement was the Law of April 8, 1932 through which he intended to solve the problem of labor unions; all workers' organizations had to submit to a certain state control; they had to take part in the state labor courts of arbitration to which all labor conflicts were to be submitted; and, finally, the date of strikes had to be announced in advance. The socialist U. G. T. submitted, of course, to all these terms and put its members into the vacancies

a bourgeois prejudice. But it was characteristic of the Spanish workers' movement that it tried from the beginning to defend a socialism of equality and freedom without sacrificing one of the basic demands to the other. It would have been impossible to gather the Spanish proletariat into strongly organized political parties as has been done in Central Europe, and to submit it to a severe discipline, the way the Socialist Party succeeded in Germany. Social Democracy and Maxism were able to invade Spain only at a comparatively late date, and until the 1920's, were not deeply rooted among the workers.

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\* At the time this was written; late fall of 1934.

insurance nor unemployment relief were introduced. The unemployed mounted to over a million. Begging and vagrancy increased tremendously; crime spread more and more.

A passing glance at the conflicts that have been rocking the Spanish republic since April 1931 will show that the revolution of April 1931 has never been completed, but continually proceeds in new revolutionary outbursts. The social organism has been shaken to its very foundations, and is unable to attain any stability.

When the Azaña government resigned in the fall of 1933, not less than 9,000 militants of the Confederación were still in Spanish prisons. Up to that time 331 workers had been shot by the police since the proclamation of the Republic.

## STRIKES AND STRUGGLES OF C. N. T. AND F. A. I.

One of the first large struggles waged by the workers under the republic was the strike of the telephone workers in 1931. The government suppressed it brutally to eliminate any revolutionary activity which might be detrimental to the American owned telephone company. The strike lasted for months. July 8, 1931, the chief of the state police ordered all civil guards to lie in ambush on the highways and to shoot without warning anybody who was suspected of tampering with telegraph poles, etc. The Minister of the Interior, Maura, had all strikers systematically arrested. They were later replaced by social democratic union men.

In September 1931, the Confederación in Barcelona declared a general strike as a protest against the mistreatment of political prisoners. The police stormed the locals of the C. N. T. unions, but succeeded in occupying the building workers' union headquarters only after a lengthy siege.

During the summer of 1931 the big agricultural laborers' strike in Andalusia took place, the city of Seville declared the general strike as an act of solidarity with the rural workers. The civil guard arrested four workers and shot them "while escaping." The general in command had the headquarters of the C. N. T. shot to pieces by the artillery.

In January 1932 the first social revolutionary uprising on a large scale took place. During a strike in Figols (Catalonia) the local miners started to take possession of the mines, to disarm the rich, and to proclaim libertarian communism. The movement extended into the entire region of the upper Llobregat river. Everything proceeded peacefully all in orderly fashion when the government ordered a large detachment of police to suppress the movement; after that anarchists were arrested en masse, 120 of them were exiled to Spanish Guinea, where they had to live under the most terrible conditions, which caused the death of one of them. These events,

in their turn, led to a protest in the form of a general strike, which extended to cities and villages all over Spain. During this strike the police shot three children who were playing in front of a house in Navalmoral (Estremadura). In Tarrasa the Anarchists took possession of the city hall, raised the black and red flag of the C. N. T., and proclaimed libertarian communism. The leaders of this uprising were condemned to 20 years' imprisonment.

One of the most magnificent strike movements started in the fall of 1932 in the *iron works of La Felguera* (Asturias). There a number of aged workmen had been dismissed and were not to get any old age pension. Then all the workers of the plant struck. This movement developed into a general strike in La Felguera and was followed by a *general strike all over Asturias*. This example is typical of the Spanish class struggle. *Actions of solidarity play the most important part.* The proclamations of the strike committee of La Felguera show this characteristic strongly. One of them reads as follows: "The workers must not fail their brothers, grown old at the work bench, who have taught them their trade and given them a shining example of how to fight." The ultimate goal of the movement: the social liberation of all, was the guiding spirit of every one of these struggles.

The year of 1933 started with a new tragedy for the revolutionary movement. In Barcelona an *uprising of the Anarchist Federation of Iberia* broke out; it spread to several villages and small towns in Valencia and Andalusia where the workers believed the hour of the final struggle had arrived. In *Casas Viejas* (Cádiz) the workers had also seized the village and tried to organize production and distribution on a communistic basis. The government sent strong police detachments to the village. Prime Minister Azaña in person told the police officers: "Neither wound, nor take prisoners, who will only be found innocent later! Shoot them straight in the belly!" The same instructions were given by the Minister of the Interior and the head of the police to the leader of the Guardia de Asalto who promptly carried out his duty. Obviously these orders had been prompted by decisions of the entire cabinet, probably with the sanction of the socialist ministers. Thus in *Casas Viejas*, after the village had been conquered and many old and young men, women and children had perished in a cabin that had been set on fire, twenty-three unarmed prisoners were shot by the police without any reason. The police officer in charge was sentenced to thirty years in prison for having committed a sixteen-fold murder. The responsible party in the government escaped unscathed.

In the country, in the villages, every year, especially in Spring, revolutionary mass actions almost always started spontaneously, without being led by any organization. *The workers ransacked olive store houses and granaries; in many villages they drove the*

landowners out of their houses, and began to cultivate the unploughed fields for their own benefit until the civil guard stopped them. Thousands of farm laborers were driven to such acts of despair by stark hunger.

Strike movements in the rural districts also occurred frequently. Every one of these strikes was declared illegal by the Azaña government. In 1932, the minister of the Interior said once that he would "place a policeman near each corn stalk" to safeguard the harvesting. That year the laborers actually worked under the bayonets of the civil guard. In spite of that there were successful strikes in the rural districts, one of the most remarkable taking place in the environs of the famous wine city of Jerez in the spring of 1933. Here the workers in the vineyards walked out to improve their living and working conditions. After the strike had lasted more than a month, the C. N. T. inspired all labor organizations in the city of Jerez to show their solidarity by a general strike. This was carried out; no newspaper appeared, no bread was baked, all cafés were closed in Jerez. The vineyard workers won their point; their daily wages were raised to 9.75 pesetas, working hours were shortened to six hours and fifteen minutes, and one hour each for breakfast and lunch, and six recesses called "cigars", consisting of fifteen minutes each, were allowed.

It would, of course, be utterly wrong to draw conclusions from the condition of these workers and apply them to Spanish farm laborers in general. The great mass of the rural proletariat lives under absolutely inhuman conditions. Even a bourgeois paper in Barcelona wrote about this topic in 1934: "Spain, so geography tells us, is a nation of twenty-two million people. But from an economic point of view, the country has only fourteen million inhabitants. *There are actually existing eight million human beings in Spain that do not consume anything.* They vegetate, but they do not live. What do these people purchase during the entire year? Well, these eight millions of poor farm laborers and midget farmers, especially in Andalusia and Estremadura, buy themselves two pairs of cloth shoes and one pair of very cheap trousers per annum. This enormous number of people does not mean anything to Spanish industry." And this after three years of the republic, of agrarian reform, and socialist labor policy!

From among the tens of thousands of strikes that succeeded one another during recent years, we can record here only a few. Let us mention the national general strike, organized as a protest against the mass arrests and the closing of many trade unions, in the beginning of May 1933, which spread all over the country, wherever the C. N. T. had any influence. The government was much concerned over the strike, the newspapers wrote of nothing else for days.

In the summer of 1933, a movement for shorter hours and corresponding increase in wages started in different parts of Spain. The building workers of Barcelona struck for this purpose fully four months. Their demand for reduction of working hours was granted only in part, but their wages were increased, so that their earnings were not reduced. Activities of this kind started in several places in Catalonia and spread to the rest of Spain. Wherever the C. N. T. could influence the course of events, better wages were obtained, so that the decrease in working hours never meant a loss of wages. If the Spanish proletariat was generally able to keep its wages at the same level or could obtain better pay during the two and a half years after the proclamation of the revolution, this was almost exclusively due to the numerous bitter fights that the Confederación led, not only against the bosses but also against the authorities who in every case sided with the capitalists. Every one of the big strikes of the C. N. T. was declared illegal, and always the armed forces were called out against the workers; clashes occurred regularly; streets were red with blood and prisoners were taken. Thousands of workers were kept in jail without knowing why.

It is hard to say anything in general about the wages of the workers in Spain. Daily wages in the larger cities range from nine to fifteen pesetas, while they are much lower in the country. In the villages of the farm laborers, the daily earnings amount to two pesetas or less, and work is only seasonal. The trade unions of the C. N. T. tried as far as possible to carry into the collective agreements the principle of wage equalization and to reduce the differences in wages among the many classes of workers. They succeeded in many cases in obtaining favorable regulations concerning vacations. The bosses were obliged to continue paying for several weeks a large percentage of a workers' wages in case of illness. The syndicalist gas workers of Barcelona had a clause in their agreement to the effect that every worker who went to prison for political reasons had to be reinstated if his jail term did not exceed a certain number of years.

In connection with the union fights of the Spanish workers, the two other great weapons of direct action must be mentioned: *sabotage and boycott were* liberally used. After a thoroughly organized *three weeks'* traffic strike in Barcelona, toward the end of 1933, the street car companies dismissed 400 syndicalist workers. This was met by an embittered sabotage campaign. Dozens of valuable street cars were destroyed by fire on remote lines. Finally all means of communication in Barcelona began to function again only under strong police guard. Numerous Spanish industries were successfully boycotted. The biggest action of this kind was against the Damm brewery in Barcelona, which had dismissed around seventy workers.

of the C. N. T. after the general strike in May 1933. The boycott slogan spread all over Spain, the firm sought to avoid the ruinous consequences by delivering their beer without a label. In many cafés where the boycotted beer was served, bombs exploded. Finally the concern gave in, put the dismissed workers back on the job, and paid a large compensation, most of which was used for the political prisoners.

## JOINT ACTION GROWS DESPITE S. P. BETRAYALS IN FIGHT AGAINST RIGHT ELECTION VICTORY

During the summer of 1933 the political situation in Spain came to a head, and severe conflicts were threatening. By-elections to various district bodies, municipal parliaments and elections of justices of the court of constitutional directors showed that the majority of the voters no longer sided with the republican-socialist coalition. *Azaña* resigned; and *Lerroux* dissolved the constituent assembly.

This forced the workers to a decision. Were they again to take part in elections or should they draw their conclusions from the sharpening of social contradictions and start a revolutionary action? The C. N. T. unmistakably declared themselves for the latter, advocating abstention from voting and preparation of the revolution. They declared: *the revolutionary worker cannot give his vote to either fascism and reaction or the bourgeois parties of the Center, but he has also been taught by the tragic breakdown of the German labor movement that a socialist-communist parliamentarism cannot check the catastrophe and is only able to create tragic illusions.*

The Socialist Party wanted to have its cake and eat it. Largo Caballero, who in the meantime had become the guiding spirit of the radical wing of the party, stressed in many speeches the uselessness of parliamentary ballyhoo, but advocated participation in elections just the same. But, he maintained, if the reaction should win the elections, *then the revolution should be started and civil war launched.* The Socialist Party, Caballero declared, would *never again enter into a coalition with bourgeois parties*, but from now on work *only for the revolution* inside and outside of the parliament. This turn swung part of the socialist masses toward more radical methods, especially the youth who were ready to sacrifice their lives side by side with the revolutionary workers of the C. N. T. for the sake of the final combat.

Elections took place; the revolutionary sections of the masses refrained from going to the polls and the Socialist Party lost half of its seats. The "Radical" Party of the great man of affairs and

opportunist politician, Lerroux, obtained the biggest representation in the new Cortes, which was dominated now by a strong right wing.

The Socialist Party was rendered powerless in the parliament; the party of Lerroux reigned under the unconcealed dictatorship of the Right, which "tolerated" it for some time. The hour to deal a great blow against the system had come. The Socialists did not do anything. Not so the C. N. T. Believing firmly that the Socialist masses behind Caballero were ready to fight the last battle, the C. N. T. started a general uprising all over the country on the day the new Cortes was opened, *December 8, 1933*. The workers proclaimed a general strike and attacked the armed forces. In several districts the uprising was completely victorious. *In many villages and small towns of Aragon, Rioja, Galicia, and Catalonia the workers disarmed the bourgeoisie, drove out or imprisoned the police, and proclaimed libertarian communism.* A manifesto of the revolutionary committee was distributed throughout the country declaring that the means of production were no longer private property, and asking the workers to take production into their own hands, to confiscate all stored provisions in villages and towns, and to reorganize the distribution of goods in the socialist manner by eliminating capitalist money. The labor organizations were to arm and not to allow any new power to dominate them, but to carry on alone the organization of the new communistic life. The government immediately declared a "state of alarm" (which, in different forms, has lasted up to the present day in Spain and has now been extended into martial law). The workers of the C. N. T. soon saw clearly *that the Socialist Party and the U. G. T. were sabotaging the uprising.* The realization of this situation had a paralyzing influence in some parts of the country, where, as a result, the movement did not grow beyond a revolutionary general strike, while in other regions the rebellious workers fought desperately to the last. In Hospitalet, a suburb of Barcelona, the fight lasted two weeks; Zaragoza, the capital of Aragon, was taken by the armed forces after a bitter struggle and so were likewise hundreds of revolutionary strong holds in the rural districts. Many armed revolutionaries fled into the hills; a great number perished through exposure and starvation in the snowed-in mountains.

The leadership of the radical wing of the Socialist Party kept aloof in the hope that after the destruction of the C. N. T. *the Party would benefit by the growing revolutionary consciousness of the people.* Through these tactics Largo Caballero believed the Socialists would be able to carry out their line of action. This attitude greatly embittered the revolutionary workers of the C. N. T. Suspicion against the Socialist leaders grew. *These are the psychologic roots of the sad fact that in the course of 1934 no revolutionary*



unity could be attained between the workers of the U. G. T and C. N. T.

In spite of that, the discussion of a united front was taken up all over the country. Largo Caballero himself started it in several public speeches. The C. N. T. unions of the central region published a manifesto which stated that the question of a united front had to be discussed in spite of the treason of Socialist leaders.

It was, of course, not so easy to find a common ground for an understanding. A united front meant to the Socialists simply that the anarchist workers should accept the party slogans. What did the Spanish Socialist Party want? According to a long speech by Prieto about that time in the Cortes, which held approximately the middle ground between the different tendencies within the party, the Socialist Party was guided by the following principles: Preservation of the political and administrative government apparatus, a "cleansing" among the officials in favor of socialist office-hunters. Preservation of the army, officers being appointed from the ranks; more liberal chances for advancement. The owner of the soil is the state, which also determines the amount of rent. Gradual socialization of industry which is to be managed by persons belonging to the middle classes. A fight against unemployment. Public works. A public school system.

It is possible that Largo Caballero's ideas went further than this, but in all his speeches he demanded solely that the party should seize power—and *no one else* but the party. Only then a policy of socialism could be undertaken. The concrete conception of the anarchist workers were not granted the least concession, they were not mentioned a single time by the speakers of the radical wing of the party.

The program of the C. N. T. was characterized by the following demands: Complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie without any compensation; abolition of the army; arming of the workers. Organization of the economic life and defense of the revolution by the trade unions and free revolutionary communes organized from below. The decisive initiative rests always with the *workers* and their own *industrial and local organizations*; the function and the jurisdiction of delegates of the district, regional, and national organizations decrease in reverse proportion to the scope of the body. Abolition of the Church. Communist or communal tilling of the soil. Firm establishment of the federalist principle in building up the socialist commonwealth.

These two programs show the dominating tendencies in the Spanish labor movement. Other trends which have followers among the workers represent only a minority. The Communist Party has influence in some trade unions in Madrid, Toledo, Sevilla, and in the North, but it cannot start any action independently. During

the fall elections in 1933 it succeeded in obtaining quite a number of votes but won only one seat in Malaga—the only one in the Cortes. In Barcelona, the most important center of Spanish industry the C. P. got only 1500 votes. Besides that there exists, especially in Catalonia, a strong independent Communist Party which opposes the official party line and approaches the left wing of the Socialist Party. Their leader, Maurin, obtained 1900 votes at the Cortes elections in Barcelona. Then there is a Trotzkyite faction. The stronghold of the U. G. T and the Socialists is in Madrid and in the North; the U. G. T. also has some influence among the agricultural laborers in certain districts in the South. There even exists an Independent Socialist Party in Catalonia which differs from the official Spanish party by its Catalan nationalism. All the Marxists, including the communist factions, both socialist parties, and the U. G. T. cannot raise more than 40,000 votes in an industrial center like Catalonia (2.5 million inhabitants).

The most significant labor groups in Spain are the masses organized in the C. N. T. and U. G. T. An extensive discussion developed between them in the beginning of 1934. It took place under conditions that were very unfavorable for the C. N. T. After the December uprising had been crushed about 16,000 militants of the C. N. T. were sent to prison. The Confederación did not have a single paper, its entire press having been prohibited, and its organizations officially dissolved. The Socialist Party worked openly and had at its disposal a daily paper in Madrid while neither of the daily papers of the C. N. T. in Madrid and Barcelona appeared any more. Several militants of the C. N. T. made far-reaching offers for a united front. Others declined to confer with Socialist leaders, but gave assurance that, in case of emergency, they would cooperate with the workers of the U. G. T., without however recognizing their leaders. A well known agitator of the C. N. T. made a concrete proposition for a united front in the Madrid daily "La Tierra"; he had worked out a plan according to which the most important *public services* would be centralized. The formation of a centralistic bureaucracy would be prevented and the entire administration of the economic life left to labor unions. He pleaded for a revolutionary workers' democracy where both mass organizations—U. G. T. and C. N. T.—could exist side by side.

*Neither the U. G. T. nor the Socialist Party ever responded to these proposals in public.* To clarify their inner situation the C. N. T. held a secret conference of delegates from all regions in February 1934, where a definite stand on the united front question was taken. In a resolution which was published later, this conference asked the U. G. T. directly *what were its revolutionary aims.* The resolution declared further that the C. N. T. could not collaborate with *political parties* but was willing to come to an understanding with

labor unions. The C. N. T. never got a reply to this official resolution. It is easy to imagine the effect this ambiguous attitude of the socialist leaders had on the C. N. T. workers.

Other events in the course of the year helped to strengthen the doubts of the C. N. T. in the honesty of the S. P. leaders. When a conflict broke out between the "Left" government of the autonomous Catalan region and the central authorities of Madrid, the Socialist Party sided openly with the bourgeois-republican government of Catalonia and forgot its promise never to enter into a political bargain with the bourgeois parties. But the S. P. went still further. There was likewise a conflict between the municipalities of the Basque provinces and the central government on matters of administration and state finances. The Basque Separatists availed themselves of this situation to stir up their regionalist movement. It should be noted that the Basque Separatist movement is *clerical-traditionalist* in character. The Socialists cooperated even with this movement. They signed an agreement which stated while the two parties were collaborating, the problem of social reforms should not be touched. (!) When acting as chairman at a conference of Basque parliamentary representatives, the Socialist, Prieto, joined the delegates in singing loudly the Basque national anthem. (!) This behavior is the more remarkable if one considers the fact that, in spite of numerous opportunist breakdowns, the Spanish Socialists in all their history had consistently clung to at least *one* principle: the idea of *centralism*.

While the S. P. thus held several irons in the fire it was at the same time preparing for revolutionary possibilities. It favored the formation of so-called "workers' alliance" all over the country, embracing the Socialist party, the U. G. T., autonomous unions, the independent Communist parties and other small labor groups. These alliances looked upon themselves as *storm troops of Largo Caballero*. The C. N. T. did not join them; the official Communist Party changed its negative attitude only recently and became a member of the regional alliances. (There was no centralized organization). The alliance flourished above all in Catalonia, where the U. G. T. is scarcely represented, but where, outside of the C. N. T., there were strong autonomous "nonpolitical" unions that were practically at the disposal of Largo Caballero. The leftist government of Catalonia had prohibited the C. N. T. but favored the Alliance. In turn, the Alliance lined up with the Catalan government on October 5, 1934.

*The situation in Asturias was entirely different. This was the only region in Spain where the workers of the U. G. T. and C. N. T. overcame all differences and succeeded in forming a free alliance between their organizations. In doing this they thought more about the present combat than the future social structure; they gave no*

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dogmatic directions to each other. In October all Asturias rose as one man. While the makeshift armored cars of the workers in Oviedo, the capital of Asturias, bore the inscription "C. N. T. F. A. I."\* the socialist workers in the villages fought under their banners for their mines. There were no actual differences between them as far as practical organization of the fight and taking care of the needs of the population was concerned. The workers themselves had taken their fate in their own hands; they were on the road to direct understanding.

After the unsuccessful uprising of December 1933 the revolutionary spirit kept on growing. A judge in Zaragoza ordered the prohibition of the C. N. T., but it continued to exist illegally. The April amnesty granted by the Lerroux government applied to all monarchists. But only part of the Anarchists were released. Over 8,000 of them had to remain in prison. In the same month of April the C. N. T. proved anew its unbroken revolutionary power by organizing a five weeks' general strike in Zaragoza which totally paralyzed the life of the city. The U. G. T. joined the C. N. T. Again the "united front from below" had taken place without negotiations or pacts. This giant strike, which caused keen excitement all over Spain, had no material aims, but was an act of solidarity for the sake of political prisoners and dismissed workers. At the same time the U. G. T. and C. N. T. in Madrid carried on a successful metal workers' strike for shorter hours and better wages. The autonomous trade unions in Valencia started a powerful general strike movement to aid the fighting workers of the electric power plants.

In all these fights the workers of the U. G. T. and other formerly inactive labor groups took a very energetic part. After the resignation of the Socialist Cabinet members the leaders of the U. G. T. no longer kept its members from striking. This resulted in a completely different situation, but in spite or perhaps on account of that, the confidence of the C. N. T. workers in the socialist leaders did not increase. The fighting spirit of the U. G. T. seemed to depend largely upon whether their leaders had cabinet posts in the government. Once they had lost their soft jobs the former reformists seemed to turn suddenly into revolutionists!

However, there was a genuine revolutionary change of heart as far as a large part of the U. G. T. workers were concerned. Above all, the *youth organizations* and the *Asturian workers* made preparations for a revolution. They gathered arms etc., but they lacked a clear and uniform revolutionary plan of action. The conduct of the leaders in the Basque and Catalan conflicts may be interpreted in many ways.

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\* Anarchist Federation of Iberia.

This was the situation when the cabinet change of October 4, 1934 took place. The Samper government had shown itself too "soft" during the conflict with Catalan government. The reactionaries had expected an energetic shake-up in Catalonia. But Samper did not have enough courage for that. As a result, he lost the support of the Right and had to hand in his resignation October 1st.

The new cabinet of Lerroux which consisted mostly of members of the Radical Party had for the first time three Rightist ministers, henchmen of *Gil Robles*. He is the leader of the united reactionary forces, that is, the Catholic Popular Action and the agrarians. His program is a Catholic fascism advocating the "corporate state" according to the Austrian pattern. The inclusion of these catholic monarchist ministers in the Cabinet of a republican government was a danger signal for the workers. Spain had entered upon a situation similar to that of the Von Papen period in Germany which was a prelude to Hitler. Fascism was at the gates.

## OCTOBER REVOLUTION, 1934

At that moment the regional *Workers' Alliances* took the initiative and started a protest movement which found its expression in *general strikes* all over Spain starting on October 5. The C. N. T. took part in these protest strikes in several cities, such as Madrid where the strike lasted nine days and led to numerous encounters. The leaders of the C. N. T. did not issue an official strike proclamation and that is why the trade unions of the Anarcho-Syndicalists did not take an active part in the strike movement in most districts. The C. N. T. stood at attention, ready as always to support the fight against fascism; but they did not want to be merely pawns in a strike movement which was essentially directed by the socialist alliances.

It was impossible for the C. N. T. to take part in the *separatist movement* which started at the same time in *Catalonia*. Here too the *Workers' Alliance* had proclaimed the general strike, but from the first day it was supported only by its own men in the various branches of the transport system, by the lower middle classes, and the commercial and office employees. The Catalan government supported the strike with all its strength. Under the very eyes of the police in Barcelona, the youth organizations of the government party were armed, and the C. N. T. workers were chased out of their shops by force of arms so that, by October 6th, the strike was general.

October 5th, right at the beginning of the strike, the Catalan Minister of the Interior had a large number of well-known anarchists imprisoned, lest the separatist movement under leadership of the ministers and the *Workers' Alliance* should be "disturbed." This

situation caused the C. N. T. to publish a short manifesto, wherein they declared that they supported the protest against fascism, adding that they would not lend a hand to party politics or separatist tendencies. The Workers' Alliance in Catalonia was ready merely to support the radical wing of the Catalan governing party which urged the proclamation of an independent Catalan republic. During the morning of October 6th, the C. N. T. started to act on their own in several parts of Barcelona by *reopening their locals which for ten months had been closed by the police*. But the police attacked the locals again and the syndicalists had to withdraw.

In the evening of October 6th, the Catalan government hastened to proclaim the independent Catalan republic as a "member of a federal Spanish republic", the Catalan government being provisionally in charge of its administration. This implied the repudiation of the Madrid government. But they failed to reckon with the Spanish government troops that were stationed in Barcelona who, instead of placing themselves at the disposal of the rebellious government, attacked it. The civilians that had been armed by the Catalan government, left their rifles in the street; the Catalan police surrendered the following morning, and the Catalan government capitulated, its power falling into the hands of the Spanish army general in charge of the troops in Catalonia.

In *Asturias* the movement developed in an entirely different direction, broadening into a *social revolutionary uprising* like nothing Spain had ever seen before. The alliance between C. N. T. and U. G. T. had borne fruit: the revolutionaries took possession of many towns and villages; the miners took over the mines. Revolutionary committees began to reorganize the distribution of food through coupons. Churches, government buildings etc. were burned. In Bembibre, as in many other places, the workers spilled petroleum in the churches. But before lighting it, they took out the image of Christ and put it on the public square with the following inscription: "Red Christ! We respect you because you belong to us."

The Asturian revolutionaries had an advantage because they had plenty of arms. Part of these they had procured during the previous months and, in addition, had seized, on the first day of the uprising, the big state ammunition factory at Trubia where not only rifles and ammunition but also brand new small cannon and several tanks fell into their hands. But the movement was cut off from the rest of Spain. The government did not allow any news to penetrate and was able to throw great masses of troops—African Foreign Legion and Arabic regiments—into *Asturias*. Thus it became master of the situation. The fighting was terrible; thousands were killed, among them the leading C. N. T. militant in *Asturias*, the Anarcho-syndicalist *José María Martíñez*. Thousands of workers

were imprisoned. The artillery of the government troops spread havoc everywhere, the illustrated newspapers later ascribing the destruction to the rebels. Large detachments of armed revolutionaries fled into the mountains, where the troops have not followed them up to the present time.

## THEY CANNOT BE CRUSHED!

It is one of the greatest tragedies of the Spanish revolution that the Asturias rebellion remained isolated and was defeated. There are a number of reasons for this: The socialist protest movement which started October 5th had no uniform aim; in Catalonia it was made to serve merely the interests of a bourgeois-republican party. On the other hand, the C. N. T. was likewise unable to control the situation and give a clear revolutionary aim to the confused mass action.

However, a glance at the history of the revolutionary movement in Spain, even a hasty examination of the revolutionary combats there since April 14, 1931 shows clearly that the resistance of the Spanish working class to fascism has not yet been broken. The continuous revolutionary mass actions since 1931 are not going to stop. Of course, the situation is more serious than it ever was before. To-day the entire Spanish *workers' movement* is in the condition which the C. N. T. had to face practically all the time: *its organizations are prohibited, its newspapers do not appear any more, its most active militants are arrested.* As the Spanish revolutionary worker is accustomed to underground activities, this does not signify by any means that the organizations have ceased to function entirely or that their fighting spirit has died down.

Political development will very soon confront the masses with the necessity of renewed action. To-day Spain is governed by a parliamentary majority, but the composition of the cabinet does not guarantee a peaceful cooperation of the parties concerned for any length of time. Any parliamentary government other than the present is, however, impossible. The calling of new elections would mean a backward step on the road towards the elimination of the constitution. Moreover, another question has not been settled as yet: in what form, if at all, is Catalan autonomy, guaranteed by the constitution, to be restored? Certain political groups of the reactionary Catalan bourgeoisie demand the preservation of autonomy, while the Spanish Rightist parties, headed by Gil Robles, want to put an end to it. At bottom these differences in the reactionary camp can be straightened out only by a dictatorship. It is not quite clear yet how such a political change will be brought about. But as the country is still in the grip of martial law and the power rests in the hands of the generals, it is very possible that they will not turn it over to a civilian government. Such a sharpening

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of the political situation would probably lead to a revival of the revolutionary movement. Spain will not quiet down; it will remain the revolutionary storm center of Europe until the final victory of the social revolution.

However, one cannot overlook the fact that the revolutionary workers' movement of the country has yet to overcome great difficulties of its own. Revolutionary unity of the workers *must* come if capitalism is to be defeated. The fight will be hard and full of bitter experiences. The united front of the revolutionary forces will get its impetus from the underground activities, from the prisons and dungeons. It is a special trait of the Spanish workers' movement that its energies are hidden under the surface for a long time without seeming to be able to break forth. All of a sudden the masses rise anew. The Spanish revolutionary movement is not kept alive by theoretical insight or tactical plans—important as they may be—but rather by a *dynamic revolutionary instinct*, a *mass passion* which breaks out again and again and which cannot be conquered. Some day it must find the road to social reconstruction. This constructive new organization will perhaps be very different from what has been called socialism up to now, especially because of its *libertarian character*. Socialism will mean here not only the striving for equality, but above all, and constantly, the endeavor to create a *life of freedom and self-determination*, to found a new *commonwealth* which shall be an alliance of independent individuals united of their own free will. It is not only possible but also very probable that the Spanish revolution will discard various theoretical preconceptions and dogmas of the anarchists as well as the socialists, but it will, *in some form or other, have this particularly libertarian character*. That will be its special value for humanity.



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