

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

The Workers' Advocate

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Revolution and civil war in Spain --Part 5 (Conclusion)

The collapse of the Spanish Republic

--March 1939--

The last chapters of the Spanish Civil War brought out in glaring form the contradictory role played by the Communist Party (CPS).

More than ever the Communist Party stood out as the party of struggle against Franco's fascism. Others wavered, cowered and tired; but the communists held up the banner of resistance and were on the front lines of the anti-fascist battle.

At the same time, the final stages of the war also brought out gaping flaws in the orientation that the CPS had pushed for building this resistance. The CPS leadership had put in practice the new line of the Communist International adopted at its 7th Congress in 1935. This new line was an opportunist rejection of the Marxist-Leninist tactics on the united front. The stunning successes of the resistance in the first stages of the war may have appeared, at least partially, to have vindicated this new line; the disaster at the end should have been a warning that the rejection of communist tactics had spread a dangerous corrosion and ultimately cost the CPS and the people's anti-fascist cause very dearly.

After the Ebro Campaign

The legendary battle on the banks of the Ebro River raged through the summer and fall of 1938. The battle itself was indecisive, and for both the republican and fascist forces, this was one of the most costly campaigns of the war in terms of men and materiel. Nonetheless, in the wake of the Ebro campaign the balance of the war began to rapidly shift in favor of Franco.

In part, this was due to international factors. The infamous Munich Pact had just taken place, whereby the capitalist governments of Britain and France gave their blessing to the invasion of

Czechoslovakia by the German nazis. In the Munich spirit, British Lord Halifax had told Mussolini's ministers in Rome that he hoped that Franco and the fascists would soon "settle the question" in Spain.

Thus encouraged, Hitler and Mussolini poured in supplies, arms and men to rebuild Franco's depleted forces. Meanwhile, the blockade of the so-called "democracies" (the bourgeois democracies of Britain, France, the U.S., etc.) only tightened against the republican side. In Madrid, food rations were limited to two ounces of beans, rice or lentils a day. There was similar hunger in Barcelona. The republican army was desperately short of rifles, let alone artillery and aircraft to match those of the fascists.

This was not the first time that the anti-fascist forces had had their backs against the wall. A successful resistance, however, would have demanded a superhuman effort on the part of the working masses. After all, the Spanish working people had already demonstrated such efforts in the defense of Madrid and other trials of strength with the more powerful enemy.

But there was something even more grave than
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THE TRANSIT AUTHORITY KILLS AGAIN

Two articles on transit from the June 7, 1987 leaflet by the New York Branch of the MLP,USA:

"SAFETY FIRST" TA KILLS AGAIN

The April 18 death of another TA worker--hit by a train--shows how even under the most perilous of conditions the TA bosses don't give a hoot about our safety.

This worker was assigned to work north of the 72nd Street station on the northbound express track. His job required going onto the high-speed southbound express track--which was without adequate flagging protection. He made a desperate bid to get out of the way of an oncoming southbound express, but didn't stand a chance.

Everyone the least bit familiar with work "in the hole" knows that the subjection of maintenance workers (whether track, structures, signal or power distribution) to such hazards is routine. This worker is dead because the TA labels safety con-

cerns as troublemaking and often retaliates with harassment. He is dead because while the TA bosses pay lip service to safety, their real policy is to press workers to chance their health and lives to luck. **And when things go wrong, they blame us.**

An investigation of this worker's death was announced. But its conclusions are predictable. Early indication came from a TA spokesman who declared beforehand that this worker may have been "trying to get a jump on the job." Could you believe it? In other words, he was so over-anxious to get the job done that he took it upon himself to go out on the tracks and get himself killed.

There is a word that the TA bosses use to cover this and almost all accidents. That word is "inattention" on the part of the victim. That is the TA's preferred way of writing off their failure to provide this worker with flagging protection.

Around every shop and worksite in the TA, big signs are posted which state SAFETY FIRST. And the TA bosses have made sure to write down thousands of safety rules governing every type of operation. And that's where the TA's safety policy ends. More than anything, all the signs and rules are intended to relieve the TA of any responsibility (and liability) for the unsafe conditions which litter the system. When accidents occur, the TA can always fall back on accusing us of "inattention."

With all the safety talk, it is routine to have Maintenance of Way workers dodging trains without flagging protection, to press them to work at heights in the rain and snow--next to live 3rd rails--just as it is routine to expose other TA workers to toxic fumes, steel dust, asbestos. You name it, the TA has tried it.

The TA's utter disregard for safety is foremost among the terrible working conditions they subject us to. When you cite their own safety rules, they either target you for harassment or cite you for insubordination. Restricting our response to the grievance procedure means accepting the dangerous work for months, when the particular safety violation may have given way to a different one. By then the damage is already done.

Our lives and well-being cannot be chanced to luck or the arbitrator. No. The fight for safety demands building up solidarity while staging actions at the gang and shop level against unsafe conditions. It means enforcing safety through a common, united struggle. And it means defending our

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struggles from the harassment and retaliation of management by strengthening our militant solidarity.

**And what say the union officials?
SONNY HALL ON SAFETY: ALL BARK, NO BITE**

Across the system, transit workers have suffered stiff penalties or opened themselves up to management's reprisals in repeated struggles waged over hazardous conditions. Whether it was track-workers being put out on the street for refusing to work on the "E1" in the rain or snow; car maintainers demanding safety equipment before they handle asbestos; bus maintainers downing tools over poor ventilation--**the common elements were workers acting together and organizing themselves against management, while the TWU hacks stood by in notable silence.**

But in the April issue of "TWU express," Sonny Hall proposes an altogether different policy. Naturally, he says, work safely. (But then the TA also says "Safety First.") Hall also says do not go back to work without a review by a Local 100 Safety Rep. And for the clincher Hall adds, "Should management attempt to harass or discipline any member for refusing to work under such a

condition, this union will retaliate immediately and effectively to protect your life."

Well blow me down! Management must be really scared. Hall is talking a fight to protect us from management harassment! But tough words from Hall are as common as innocent pleas from Ronald Reagan--and just about as believable.

But there is hidden meaning behind Hall's huffing and puffing. Could it be that Hall is expressing dissatisfaction with workers' taking safety concerns into their own hands? Is it that Hall would like us to entrust our safety to his "ever vigilant, ever present" safety reps?

It will be a cold day in hell before Hall's safety reps stop the thousand-and-one dangers we face every day on the job. And it will be an even colder day when Hall protects the job of any worker who stands up to management over unsafe work conditions. This is a task we must take up ourselves. <>

**May Day speech
REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN THE CONTRAGATE CRISIS
AND THE FIGLEAFS OF THE BOURGEOISIE**

Below are excerpts from the first May Day speech given at the MLP meeting in New York City this year:

May Day is not only a day when the workers all over the world celebrate their unity in the struggle against capital, it is also a time when the class-conscious workers review the situation facing their struggle and discuss the path forward.

One of the most significant developments of the past year is the contragate scandal, which has shaken the Reagan administration. Reagan's teflon coating has melted away. ... Certainly the contragate exposures are a favorable development for the working class struggle and for our revolutionary work.

But we are not the only ones who realize that the contragate exposures help shake the faith in the bourgeois government and create an opening for more revolutionary work among the working

masses. The liberal Democrats, the Republican Party leaders, and even the Reaganites realize this and have set about organizing damage control to restore the credibility of the presidency and the bourgeois government and even of Reagan if possible.

Taking Part in the Damage Control

But most disgusting in all this activity is the activity of the revisionist and social-democratic liquidators who are working with might and main to divert the anger against Reagan into support for the Democrats.

The essential theory of the liquidators is that the contragate crimes are the activity of a right-wing faction of the bourgeoisie and military around Reagan who were usurping power -- but now the liberal and supposedly "progressive" sections of the bourgeoisie are rallying to stop them and our movement should be built in support of the lib-

erals, especially the liberals of the Democratic Party.

This fairy tale is most extensively elaborated by Gus Hall and his pro-Russian revisionist CPUSA who claim that contragate has uncovered a secret military clique which was threatening bourgeois democracy and running U.S. foreign policy, usurping the power of the elected representatives of the people. But now, according to Hall, Congress has woken up and the elected representatives of the people, Democratic and liberal Republican alike, are supposed to have realized that Reagan has gone too far -- and if the people support these congressmen, they will save bourgeois democracy and change Reagan's cold war policies.

So, while the contragate scandal has given the masses a glimpse of the ugly inner workings of the imperialist state and bourgeois democracy, here come the respectable revisionists, running to offer themselves as a shield for the nakedness of bourgeois rule. They should apply for jobs on the Tower Commission.

North, Secord and Co. Are Just the Tip of the Iceberg

But it was not Reagan's inner circle that invented the use of murder, assassination, secret wars, financial swindles, drug-running and the other contragate methods of conducting U.S. foreign policy. This is the everyday business-as-usual for U.S. imperialism under both Republican and Democratic presidents. Remember Viet Nam and Operation Phoenix, where North, Secord, and Shackley got their start. Remember the Bay of Pigs where the CIA's contra advisers got their first training. Remember how the CIA organized a coup in Chile for ITT and Anaconda.

The key contragate players have been around in the military and CIA apparatus for decades. They have engaged in all kinds of murderous activity for U.S. imperialism and have been steadily promoted in rank during both Republican and Democratic administrations. For Secord and Shackley who ran Operation Phoenix in Viet Nam, the contra war is actually small potatoes.

Everyone Knew

The murderous activities of these gentlemen has long been known in the hierarchy of the CIA, in the Pentagon, and among the politicians in Washington: But no one ever said anything because their activities were regarded as normal, respectable activities of the government. Moreover as North, Secord, and the boys rose in the NSC [National Security Council] and Pentagon hierarchy, they, like all good bureaucrats and military men,

developed ever closer ties with the big bourgeoisie. North hobnobbed daily with the big capitalists in his contra fund-raising activities. Secord, upon retirement from the Air Force, became a multi-million dollar arms merchant.

To think that the rich could maintain their empire of multinational corporations, their super-exploitation of millions of toilers around the world, without an apparatus of intriguers and such like North and Secord is to take leave on one's senses. It is to this strata of people, those like North and Secord, that they entrust the daily operation of the government. This is what contragate shows.

But the biggest absurdity of the revisionists is the theory that Congress and the Democrats are going to change the Reaganite policy. Contragate shows what Marx and Lenin told us long ago: that congresses and parliaments in bourgeois democracies are just talk shops to fool the people, while the real policies of the rich are carried out by the military bureaucratic apparatus that is the real government. For show, Congress "cut off aid" to the contras during 1984, but contragate shows that the aid was actually increased. And what does Congress do? It grants the culprits immunity, liberal and conservative babble together about restoring the credibility of the Presidency, and some congressman took up a collection for Oliver North's defense.

Even after contragate began, the Democratic-controlled congress still voted more money for the contras. When asked why, they said despite Reagan's blundering, they gave the money because they didn't want to be seen as being responsible for losing Nicaragua. Not only is this a statement of their basic imperialist outlook, but who are they worried about offending? It can't be the working people -- because even the polls show that 70 percent of the American people are opposed to U.S. intervention in Central America and to Reagan's contra war. It is the rich that they worry about offending. They know which side their bread is buttered on. Reaganism is the bipartisan policy of the rich. Cows will fly before the Reaganite offensive is reversed by the Democrats.

Gladiators for the Democratic Party Arena

This revisionist orientation of lining up behind the Democrats is best expressed in an editorial in the pro-Russian revisionist Line of March's newspaper **Frontline**, distributed at the April 25th demonstration. Line of March says:

"Left and progressive forces who are serious about affecting national policy cannot be indifferent to the fact that the struggle against Reaganism over the next year and one-half will increasingly

be fought out in the arena of bourgeois electoral politics and principally on the terrain of the Democratic Party.

"We might not wish that were the case...But...at a moment when it is possible to influence the outcome of a struggle which is already shaping up with the Democratic Party, any decision to abstain from the confrontation is a surefire prescription for irrelevancy."

And there you have it: if you don't go along with the Democrats you are irrelevant, you are out of the movement, you are a pariah.

But this is not just passive condemnation of independent class politics and anything that even smells like independent class politics. The Democrats' little helpers are determined to crush anything that is outside the fold.

On April 11 there was supposed to be a big student march in Boston to condemn racism on the campuses, U.S. aggression in Central America, and U.S. support for apartheid. Student groups from a number of campuses and a high school came to organizing meetings. But these meetings were dominated by DSA and LRS liquidators who wanted to confine the demonstration to a rally for Jesse Jackson to speak at and to confine the slogans to what was acceptable to the Democrats. When they found out that Jesse wouldn't come to speak, they lost interest in organizing for April 11th.

This wasn't just a passive boycott.

Reformist Dirty Tricks Against the Movement

When they found out that the Marxist-Leninist Party, **The Student**, and a number of Brookline High School students were going ahead without them, they sent people around to public meetings and film showings to announce that April 11th had been cancelled. We know because our comrades caught in the act the DSA man, who was supposed to be in charge of publicity for the coalition. Despite this heavy opportunist boycott, we went forward with the demonstration and had a successful, although small, action. Many students were affected by the boycott and did not show up, and certainly those that did show up could see the force that the opportunists bring against the movement. 30 demonstrators instead of 300. But people will remember how the MLP defended the movement when the liquidators wanted to wreck it for Jesse.

The Struggle of Trends Intensifies

Capitalism is going into crisis. There are signs that the movement is coming up in the not-too-distant future. But the sailing will be far from

smooth. The struggle of political trends is intensifying. The trade union hacks and reformists are trying to control the movement for the Democratic Party and isolate the revolutionary left before the movement has really come up. There will be sharp ups and downs and painful periods of stagnation.

In this complicated situation it is important to keep one's bearings. We must keep in mind the objective of winning the masses away from bourgeois reformist politics and of building the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist trend in the movement. We must not be overwhelmed by the temporary ability of the reformists to dominate the movement and call out large numbers. The reformists are betraying the masses. We must stick with the masses. We must stick with independent revolutionary work and learn still better how to appeal to the half-formed striving of the masses for struggle, for independent class politics, for revolution. This is the policy we carried out on April 25th, and we saw clearly how much the masses were attracted to our work despite the opportunist domination of the demonstration.

Ours is a small party. The liquidators and reformists like to berate us for that, though now they have a harder time since they don't have big organizations these days either. But they tell us: "if only you give up your nasty hatred of the bourgeois parties and those outdated revolutionary class politics, you could join the liberal-labor marsh and organize thousands and millions for the rainbow coalition or the 'progressive' faction of the labor aristocracy."

But we say: no, thank you. You are basing yourselves on the strata of petty bourgeois and labor hacks that sells out the masses to the bourgeoisie. We will stick with the workers and the oppressed. We may be small for now and for a while to come, but ours is a strong party, a class party, a revolutionary party with close ties with the working masses. We will stick with the Leninist teaching that the crux of Marxist tactics in the era of imperialism is to go lower and deeper among the masses, showing the masses how the opportunists betray the working class for their own temporary interests.

The Colossus Will Crumble, the Working Class Will Rise Up

There are those among the bourgeoisie who thought that Reaganism would last forever. Reagan was touted as the strong leader, the great communicator, the invincible bully. But after a mere six years, the Reaganite colossus is crumbling. And the opportunism that has dominated the working class movement in the U.S. for decades is a colossus of the same type.

Ten years ago the neo-revisionists dominated the Marxist-Leninist movement that emerged from the '60s. They had 20 times our numbers. Ten years ago our Party said opportunism is a colossus with feet of clay and we are chipping away at those feet. Where are the neo-revisionists today? They are leaves that scattered in the wind.

Today, as we approach a new wave of struggle after a painful decade of decline of the mass movements, we have the even bigger task of win-

ning the working masses away from the much larger liberal-labor marsh. This is the content of preparing our class for the triumph of its own, socialist, proletarian revolution.

Ours is the party of the future. In the complicated but exciting days ahead, if we persist in revolutionary work, we will learn to build our Party still deeper in the working' class, and we will chip away at the liberal-labor colossus and bring it down. <>

**CORRECTION TO THE ARTICLE
"TROTSKYISM FOLLOWS IN THE WAKE OF REFORMISM"**

The article "On Bolshevik Tendency's Polemic against our Party/Underneath the revolutionary phrases, Trotskyism follows in the wake of reformism" appeared in the May 20, 1987 issue of the **Workers' Advocate Supplement**. This article has been met with enthusiasm.

Certain inaccuracies crept into this article. The correction of these mistakes actually strengthens the views being put forward.

On BT and the Contragate Action Committee

First of all, and most important, is the question of the Contragate Action Committee in the San Francisco Bay Area. First let us recall what the CAC is and then make the correction.

The CAC was formed at a time when many activists were fed up with the opposition to militancy by the open reformist forces. The CAC called on the activists to take part in some militant demonstrations against the presence of the CIA's Southern Air Transport at Oakland airport. Unfortunately, however, the main leadership of the CAC has not fought the reformist sabotage of the movement in general or their boycott of CAC actions in particular. Instead they have promoted reconciliation with the reformists, and this has led these CAC leaders into passivity.

The article correctly characterized the BT's stand on the CAC actions. The BT thought that the main point of the CAC actions would be if they could attract the reformist forces, and particularly the bankrupt reformists of the pro-Soviet "Communist Party". As the article pointed out, the BT supported a conciliatory stand towards the reformists. Indeed, BT even wanted the CAC leaflets further watered down.

However, the article erroneously identified BT as being among the leaders of the CAC. This is not correct. BT did not officially join the CAC, although it took part in most organizational meetings (attending them or speaking at them, but not voting in them) and demonstrations. BT did not endorse the CAC. And, until the third demonstration, it did not endorse the CAC demonstrations either.

This actually reinforces the view of the article concerning BT's disdain towards the struggle. It stood aside passively from the movement. It was

not enthusiastic about developing mass actions in defiance of the reformists. And its refusal to join the CAC was not a principled stand against conciliation with reformism, since BT agreed with conciliation with reformism. Instead BT was simply grumbling that the CAC leadership had not succeeded in attracting the open reformists, blaming the CAC for not effectively attracting the reformists, etc.

The error on BT's membership in the CAC was based largely on one of the main leaders of the CAC being formerly an important cadre of the BT. And the BT basically gave the same views as this leader, only being if anything more passive and more rightist. But it turns out that this CAC leader had split from the BT some time ago.

On BT's position paper "Not the 'movement' but a revolutionary party!"

This BT diatribe against the militant anti-apartheid struggle and the self-sacrificing struggle of the militants was identified as a leaflet. Actually it was produced as a "position paper" for a Campaign Against Apartheid conference last year. However, if anything, this simply emphasizes the seriousness of BT's disgraceful stand regarding struggle, self-sacrifice, and the building of the mass struggle.

And a typographical matter

Finally, all the left-handed, single quotation marks in this article (but not the right-handed ones) were replaced by blanks in the final printed version. Actually, this is a technical problem that affected the entire issue of the **Supplement** and a few previous issues and has just been noticed. A "bug" or problem in the word processing process was responsible for this.

This had the following result. The BT statement "Not the 'movement' but a revolutionary party!" became "Not the movement' but a revolutionary party!". Similarly, "to expose and oppose 'education' under a capitalist system" became "to expose and oppose education' under a capitalist system", "to pressure the imperialists to act 'morally'" became "to pressure the imperialists' to act morally", etc. <>

Civil War and Revolution in Spain
THE COLLAPSE OF THE REPUBLIC -- MARCH 1939

Continued from the front page

the lack of rifles and bread. By the fall of '38, there had been major political changes within the republic itself. The revolutionary upheaval unleashed at the outset of the war is what had inspired the masses to fight with such initiative, courage and self-sacrifice. Now, the revolutionary fires had been cooled. On top of the blockade and hunger, this was a heavy factor stacked against the continuing resistance.

Unfortunately, the CPS leadership was blind to this factor.

**"Greater and Greater Success"
for the CPS Policy**

By this time, the CPS boasted of nearly complete success for its policy. Its propaganda was often euphoric. In December 1938, Antonio Jimenez of the CPS wrote an article from Barcelona on "Some Lessons and Perspectives" of the war which was carried in the journal of the CI (The Communist International, Jan. 1939). Jimenez boasted that the CPS policy was "being put into effect with greater and greater success" and that the republic had "consolidated its internal position." The main successes he pointed to were:

(a) the creation of a "strong, unified" army, "which is establishing itself on a firmer basis from day to day";

(b) a "powerful war industry";

(c) the "continuance in power of a strong democratic republican government" and the "strengthening [of] the authority of the government"; and

(d) the Popular Front "uniting all Spaniards without respect to differences of class or of ideological tendencies... [including] those sections of the bourgeoisie who do not wish the country to become one of Hitler's or Mussolini's colonies." This was an alliance which Jimenez described as "becoming a truly all-national front, on which the strongest fascist beasts of prey will break their teeth."

But each one of these alleged "successes" achieved by the CPS carried a heavy price. The army was built through the suppression of the workers' militias and the mass initiative and mobilization for defense work. And far from a united army, its officer corps was honeycombed with capitulators and traitors, many from the old repub-

lican army. In the name of war production, the workers' committees were dispersed and management was frequently restored to its old owners. As well, the authority of the bourgeois republican regime was reestablished through the destruction of the revolutionary committees of the workers and impoverished laborers. The "consolidat[ion] of the machinery of state," which the CPS leaders took so much pride in, was achieved against the upheaval of the workers and peasants, as the masses had been clamoring for a new revolutionary power of the toilers.

In short, the CPS policy of all-class "national unity" meant choking off the revolution of the workers and poor. It meant narrowing it down to what was acceptable to the bourgeoisie. It meant that the revolutionary interests of the working class were made to take a back seat behind the cringing bourgeois liberals and reformists.

Impending Collapse

On such a foundation, the whole republican and Popular Front structure -- despite all the efforts of the CPS to reenforce it -- was always shaky. The shift of the military balance after the Ebro campaign left it teetering on the edge of collapse. Within days of when Jimenez penned his article about its wondrous strength and unity, it started to crash down on the shoulders of the CPS.

By the fall of 1938, defeatism was now rampant within the republican government and military staff. President Azana and the bourgeois liberals, the social-democratic chiefs of the PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain), and many government officials and army-officers were scrambling to find a suitable way to capitulate and save their skins.

The CPS leaders tried desperately to stem the defeatist tide, but to no avail. They tried to shuffle the deck of ministers and officers, but the whole pack was stacked with bourgeois and reformist capitulators. The CPS leaders ended up placing all their bets on the social-democratic Prime Minister Juan Negrin. Negrin and his foreign minister Alvarez del Vayo spoke in favor of continuing the resistance. Whatever their personal intentions, however, there was little they could do as they found themselves bound to their fellow social-democratic chieftains and their republican military officers. They could do nothing for the resistance but carry on a timid diplomacy among their capitulationist colleagues against those

demanding an unconditional surrender.

Meanwhile, the working masses were left more and more on the sidelines. With their revolutionary initiative broken, they became almost passive observers of the conflict in the ministries and military staffs for and against continuing the resistance. In this situation, defeatism began to also grip wider sections of the masses.

In the battlefield, the republican troops, especially the CPS forces, kept up the struggle. Now, however, the determination and fervor of the CPS fighters no longer provided the catalyst for the general popular resistance that it had in the earlier days of the war.

In December, Franco launched an offensive against Catalonia and the world was shocked at how easily the resistance there was broken. Even Barcelona fell without a strong mass mobilization to resist.

Casado's Coup

After the loss of Catalonia, the republic still held a third of Spanish territory and the key centers of Madrid and Valencia. Most of the republican army was still intact. Nonetheless, within the republican camp the idea of defeating the fascists was all but abandoned. The aim of the resistance became simply to ensure a more bearable surrender. Prime Minister Negrin offered Franco peace on the condition that there would be no reprisals. (Apparently, the CPS leadership did not object to Negrin making this offer.) Meanwhile, President Azana fled to Paris demanding an immediate surrender. The trickle of desertions by republican leaders became a flood when Britain and France gave diplomatic recognition to Franco in February '39.

Back in Spain, a revolt had been brewing against continuing any type of resistance. Apart from a handful clustered around Negrin, the non-CPS leaders of the Republic and the army had come to the consensus that a better deal could be cut with Franco if the CPS were pushed out of the way. Plans were put in motion for a coup d'etat against Negrin and his CPS allies. The main plotters were army officers of the old republican army led by Colonel Casado, commander of the central army in Madrid. The former Popular Front allies of the CPS came to the side of the plotters: the bourgeois liberals, most of both the right-wing and "left" phrasemongering leaders of the PSOE, the chiefs of the social-democratic UGT trade union center, and the Madrid leaders of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT unions.

On March 6, army units under Casado launched, against the CPS-led forces, a civil war within the civil war. All of a sudden, the CPS found itself

tossed from the summits of power, isolated and under siege. The Party leadership lost its bearings and disintegrated. The best of the CPS military officers tried to defend their forces, while at the same time not abandoning the front lines on the outskirts of Madrid where Franco's troops were pressing against the city. After several days of heavy fighting, the CPS reportedly gained the upper hand in Madrid. But they were afraid to take any decisive steps against Casado because they didn't want to be blamed for violating "popular front unity" (which, of course, had already been smashed to smithereens). Even worse than this paralysis, many CPS military officers became outright traitors and threw in their lot with Casado.

Fragmented and disoriented, the CPS forces were defeated. CPS fighters and cadre were rounded up and shot. The Party was driven underground by the army, the Assault and Civil Guards, and the secret military police (SIM). All of this machinery of the capitalist state, which CPS had been so instrumental in consolidating, was now throttling the CPS itself.

Casado's junta had hoped to negotiate a surrender to Franco that would at least allow leniency towards the old-guard military officers. These negotiations collapsed as Franco would accept no conditions and pressed the fight. Now, however, the resistance was collapsing. The republican army was falling apart. The remaining republican leaders scrambled to make their way to France. The working masses, meanwhile, were left

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on their own, without leadership or organization, to face Franco's bloody reprisals.

Within three weeks of Casado's coup, the war came to a most painful and bitter conclusion. This debacle showed the filthy treachery of the republican bourgeoisie and the total spinelessness of the social-democratic and anarcho-syndicalist chieftains. It also said a great deal about the leadership provided by the CPS, because it was their rotten anti-Leninist policy which allowed this treachery and spinelessness to take such a heavy toll.

Weaknesses in Implementing the Line of a Wrong Line?

The Casado coup left the CPS leaders shaking their heads and asking themselves "what went wrong?" One of these leaders was a leading member of the Italian CP, Palmiro Togliatti. Togliatti was the Communist International's representative in Spain and he was also a principal leader of the CPS in the last phases of the war. Togliatti's reports from during and right after the coup provide some useful insight.

As a leader of the CI, Togliatti had been an author of the policy followed by the CPS in the Spanish Civil War. After the defeat, too, he remained a foremost champion of this policy. At the same time, it was no longer possible to simply sing the glories of this policy and leave it at that. The closing disaster demanded at least the appearance of a critical examination. Of special note here is Togliatti's May 21, 1939 report to the CI, where he sums up the weaknesses that precipitated this fiasco. (This report was not openly published until decades later. One place it can be found is in Palmiro Togliatti, Escritos Sobre la Guerra de Espana, Barcelona 1979)

*** Lack of unity within the Popular Front:**

Togliatti points out that, "Unity was reduced to a slogan agitated by all," that "the unity of the diverse popular anti-fascist parties and organizations was not sufficient," and that it was often only "formal" or "exterior." "Nearly all the parties," he complains, "put their particular interests before the general interests of the people and the war."

Indeed, there was a gaping chasm between the highfalutin declarations of unity on the one hand, and the bitter political struggles and divisions within the republic on the other. So what was to be done about this contradiction?

Togliatti only concludes that unity-mongering wasn't taken far enough. Among other things, he attempts to theorize that unity wasn't achieved be-

cause of the failure to understand that this was not like "a Spanish civil war of the past century," but "a war of independence against great imperialist countries." In other words, unity of one and all was necessary and achievable if everyone would just accept the redefinition of the war as a national independence war in the face of foreign intervention.

This is an anti-Marxist pipedream. In reality, this civil war resembled earlier Spanish civil wars in many ways. The most obvious difference was that in the more capitalistically developed Spain of the 1930's the contending political and class forces were far more highly organized and the contradictions among them were sharper and deeper than ever. Theorizing about the intervention of the German and Italian fascists did not change this most striking feature of the Spanish Civil War. Nor did the sentimental petty bourgeois yearnings of Togliatti and the CPS leaders.

It's not for Marxists to impotently complain that parties and classes struggled too hard in their own interests. On the contrary, what Marxism is all about is analyzing this struggle and struggling to advance as far as possible the interests of the working class and its political party. It was the task of the Spanish communists to unfold the struggle between political trends in the direction most favorable to the working class, communism and the anti-fascist resistance. An important part of this was arming the working class as to just where it stands in relation to the other classes, including incessant warnings about the treacherous and two-faced role of the bourgeois liberals and reformists. The CPS leaders, however, never made such a warning.

*** Lack of vigilance against capitulationists:**

After the fact, Togliatti concedes that there were severe weaknesses in the face of capitulators and traitors. "The struggle against the enemies of the people ... against the traitors that had left Franco in the army and in the state apparatus ... against the disloyal elements ... against the capitulationists, was not conducted ... with energy, vigilance and coherence." And Togliatti concedes that this meant "a great part of these elements ... remained in the anti-fascist organizations and the Peoples Front, [and] occupied posts of command," something which "sapped the unity of the people and demoralized a part of the masses." (May 21, 1939)

Sadly, this is all too true. But no one more than the leadership of the CPS must be blamed for this failing. After all it was the CPS who fought hardest to rescue and keep in top positions the forces that led the Republic before the war: the

bourgeois liberals, the reformists of the PSOE, the officers of the old army, etc. These were the same bourgeois forces which had allowed Franco and the fascists to prepare their coup unhindered, and which became nests of capitulationism and betrayal during the course of the war.

Moreover, the CPS had worked to convince the working masses to give up the distrust and suspicions which they held for these forces. CPS general secretary Jose Diaz had portrayed these forces as "fight(ing) nobly and bravely... capably carrying out leading work in the economic and political life of our country." And Diaz spoke of the Party's commitment to this alliance which must "never be undermined." (See The Communist International, May 1937.) The CPS had pledged its complete loyalty to the President of the Republic, the liberal Azana, until after he turned traitor and ran. They also painted General Miaja as a national hero, until he turned up as the President of Casado's junta of betrayal.

What conclusion should be drawn from the treachery of the Azanas and Mijas? It doesn't mean that the revolution could not take advantage of the fact that a section of the upper classes ended up not joining Franco's coup. Or that it could not exploit the military expertise of the minority of officers of the old army that stayed with the Republic. Some means of dealing with such forces was probably necessary. But, in whatever form this was to be done, it demanded a great deal of care, including hard work to train the masses in political vigilance, clearly identifying the capitalist strata as the class basis of treachery and explaining what could be expected from the liberal politicians, military officers, etc.

But that isn't what Togliatti means when he bemoans the lack of vigilance against traitors. When Togliatti and the other CPS leaders spoke of vigilance they posed it as a matter of better police action, or maybe removing this or that suspected individual. In other words, they never posed vigilance in the political sense as a problem of classes or class strata. They never told the masses to watch out for the bourgeois strata as the strata most prone to capitulation and betrayal. Quite the opposite. The CPS leaders rejected such warnings as something harmful to the policy of all-class unity.

* Loss of independent initiative:

This failure is one of the reasons the CPS found itself paralyzed in the face of the Casado coup. The whole Party proved incapable of independent or decisive action.

Togliatti dwells on this problem: "Politically,

the fear of breaking the Popular Front, at a moment in which unity was seen as being in serious danger and in which all the rest of the parties had broken from it, put brakes on and in certain moments paralyzed the action of both the leadership and the base of the party. In this period the party made its action depend too much on that of prime minister Negrin and the party committed errors in its relations with the masses, something which contributed to its isolation."

Togliatti then must draw the condemning yet inescapable conclusion that "A consequence of all this, at a decisive moment the leadership found itself overcome and impotent." (May 21, 1939, emphasis added.)

Even if the leadership had done better at this moment, they would have found themselves to be a general staff without an army. The rank and file and the sympathizers of the party were totally unprepared to stand up to Casado's coup. In his report of March 12, six days after the fighting broke out between the troops of Casado and the CPS, Togliatti notes: "About the attitude of the civil population, I don't have concrete news, but it is certain that it didn't participate in the struggle." And in weighing the leadership's options, Togliatti points out that the CPS could not count on the support of the masses if it counterattacked against Casado.

Why were the working masses so unprepared for independent action? Because the CPS abandoned any independent stand from the bourgeoisie. The CPS was then the strongest party in all Spain and enjoyed immense prestige. But when push came to shove, this didn't amount to a hill of beans. This is because the Party had effaced any independent identity as a proletarian party of revolution and communism. The CPS was known as the staunchest champion of the Republic and of popular front unity. But that's about it. Beyond that, it did its best to convince the world that the Communist Party in Spain desired nothing beyond a bourgeois parliamentary republic and to fulfill the common liberal democratic program of the Popular Front. It also vehemently denied that there were any questions of principle separating the CPS from the social-democratic and reformist PSOE. (It's criticism of the PSOE became reduced to chiding certain PSOE elements for failing to recognize this and resisting the fusion of the two parties.) And, in practice, the CPS buried itself within the republican apparatus and officer corps.

What then were the workers to think when they saw the CPS all of a sudden under siege by republican army officers in league with the liberal and social-democratic chiefs? No wonder that there was confusion and paralysis, even through the ranks of the CPS itself.

*** Lack of attention to organizing the masses:**

This failure to train the workers in an independent stand was symptomatic of a united front policy that focused everything at the top (government posts, military positions, party leaderships, etc.) and tended to skip over the work among the masses below. Togliatti's reports from throughout the war repeatedly come back to this problem.

"It can't be forgotten," Togliatti stressed, "that the ties with the masses... were always one of the weakest points of the party." (March 12, 1939) He considered the lack of influence among the workers of Madrid and Barcelona to be the "fundamental defect" of the CPS. And he harped on the Party's failure to gain strength in the two big trade union centers, the UGT led by the social-democrats and the CNT led by the anarcho-syndicalists.

Of course, Togliatti's own idea of contact with the masses had a right opportunist slant. At times he reduces winning the masses to winning the trade union bureaucracies. Apparently, his model of "links with the masses" was the PSOE because its leadership was composed of top trade union officials (without noting that these officials were a reformist gang of do-nothing bureaucrats who were truly detached from the masses).

Nonetheless, there is a kernel of reality in Togliatti's complaints about the Party's lack of ties with the masses. This is that organizing and mobilizing the rank-and-file workers became less and less of a priority for the CPS leadership. "The attention of the party and as well of its leading center," Togliatti summed up in his May '39 report, "concentrated, generally, more in the struggle, absolutely necessary, on the conquest of the centers of leadership, above all in the army, than in the work of strengthening and of systematically organizing the links of the party with the masses."

In his report of September 15, 1937, Togliatti criticizes the CPS for its lack of attention to the factories and trade unions. He also points out that, when they did deal with this front, what "mainly interests the comrades" was in "winning leadership positions, etc." and that they are "oriented more towards agreements at the top than towards mobilization of the masses organized in the unions on the basis of defense of their interests."

Togliatti then presents a striking example of how the CPS tended to work. In the Valencia region the trade union apparatus was controlled by left-phrasemongering social-democrats hostile to the CPS. Togliatti reports how the CPS leaders planned to handle this problem by negotiating a deal with the right social-democratic leaders and then bringing in the government authorities to oust

the existing union leadership. Meanwhile, he notes that there was "total neglect of the most elementary mass work: mobilization of the workers in the plants and union assemblies" against the union officials that the CPS wanted to unseat.

This story was repeated in a thousand and one ways during the war. Towards the anarcho-syndicalist CNT trade unions, the CPS combined a policy of police pressure and attempts to rope in the top CNT leaders. But what of the work among the hundreds of thousands of the CNT rank and file? Togliatti asserts that "The relations with the anarchist masses and the organized work among them was always neglected." (May 21, 1939)

While focusing on gaining the top leaderships of the unions, the CPS leaders forgot about the immediate interests of the masses. Togliatti criticizes the Party's "lack of attention ... to the solution of the economic problems that most closely interested the masses (provisions, distribution, etc.)" (May 21, 1939) The Party remained aloof from "burning questions of a trade union character, concerning workers' wages, etc." (Sept. 15, 1937) And within its overall policy, according to Togliatti, more importance had to be given "to the defence of the immediate interests and the aspirations of the working class, rural laborers and poor peasants." (Sept. 15, 1937)

In short, the CPS leaders turned the Leninist concept of united front work on its head. It was no longer a tactic to strengthen the fighting solidarity of the working masses in defense of their class interests. United front work was no longer a road to winning the masses to an independent communist line. The united front became an end to itself. It was turned into a series of combinations and intrigues among the social-democratic and opportunist chiefs. The sorry result was that when these combinations fell apart, the CPS found itself isolated and separated from the working masses.

*** Neglect of the underground work:**

Another hole in the CPS policy was its lack of attention to clandestine activity in the zone controlled by the fascists. Togliatti points to "enormous delay and genuine impotence in the work in the zone occupied by Franco." (May 21, 1939)

Typical of the CPS and CI leaders of the day, Togliatti refuses to mention one of the most critical questions of the work in Franco's army and the territories under his control: the oppressed colonial subjects of Spanish Morocco. To the end of the war, the CPS remained shamelessly silent about this problem. It meekly trailed in the wake of the chauvinism of the capitalist liberals and social-democrats. This not only trampled on the

principles of internationalism, it was also amazingly stupid given that a fight on behalf of the liberation of the Moroccans had the potential for undermining this important part of Franco's troops and rear.

It is also true that the CPS leaders neglected the work among the Spanish soldiers, workers and peasants groaning under the fascists. In all fairness, it needs to be kept in mind that this work was difficult as the repression under the fascists was very severe. As well, the CPS had its hands full with conducting the war and all the complex problems within the republican zone. Nonetheless, a number of the accounts of the war note how little the CPS did in terms of organizing partisans or agitating among the troops on the other side of the line, although such things would have had military value. Moreover, in the republican areas threatened by fascist occupation the preparations for carrying on the underground resistance was also underestimated. This is even less easily explained.

The perspective of the CPS leaders was to place their whole confidence in the republican government and army. The CPS officials also became somewhat smug and self-satisfied with their positions in this apparatus. It seems that it just wasn't taken into account that the struggle may face temporary setbacks. The perspective was lost of the CPS having to stand up on its own and lead the masses against the fury of the class enemy. Thus, it wasn't well prepared for work from below against the fascist tyranny or, for that matter, facing the anti-communist terror of the Casado junta.

Speaking of the latter, Togliatti commented:

"The party's base organizations did not respond well during this last period. Isolated from the masses, expelled from the popular front, town councils and everywhere, the comrades were very fearful of any action or statement. In the practical work, the abrupt change in the situation had disoriented almost everyone. Accustomed to power and the possibilities for action that this offered, they were no longer able to act swiftly in a situation of semi-legality." (May 21, 39)

Togliatti paints a picture that CPS leaders clung to the government ministries, even when they had nothing to do there, until the very end before fleeing the country. Meanwhile, the work of organizing the Party for the new underground situation was neglected. This added to the confusion and disorganization that struck the CPS and the workers in general in the last days of the war. The cost of this disintegration was heavy in terms of lives and suffering. It was also a major setback to the organization of the underground resistance and the regeneration of the revolutionary

movement.

* Lack of communist training:

Togliatti also dwells on the lack of communist training within the CPS. He points out that most of the cadres of the CPS were recruited on the eve of and during the war. He makes a criticism that these cadres "were not educated, assimilated and bolshevized with the necessary speed." (May '39) This created a weak internal situation, including "organizational methods typical of 'bossism'" within the party.

It is hard to tell how much of what Togliatti says about these problems is mere breast beating and how much is real. But one point seems irrefutable:

"In respect to, in particular, the military cadres, the party accepted many elements (rapidly) without control and without making the effort to educate them as communists ... This is one of the reasons that so many communist military men betrayed us in the last moments." (May 21, 1939)

Indeed, what type of communist training could there be within the CPS? After all, the leadership was doing its best to convince the world (first and foremost the Spanish bourgeois and capitalist Europe) that the CPS was a party of the unity of all classes and of the parliamentary bourgeois republic. Naturally, they convinced much of their ballooning membership during the course of the war of the same thing.

Symptoms of a Disease

Put all these things together and Togliatti has painted a very sorry picture. The CPS had emerged as a big party, a powerful party. Its forces displayed world-renowned courage in the battlefield against the fascist beast. But underneath the party was corroded as it shed its revolutionary and Leninist features.

It called itself a communist party of the working class. In reality it became a party lacking independence, mired in the capitulationist swamp of the bourgeois liberals and reformists. It was a party that relied more on the capitalist regime than on building independent solid links with the working class. It was a party that failed to carry out communist training and which was devoid of the revolutionary spirit of the class struggle and socialism.

Is it any wonder that such a poorly built and unwieldy machine -- despite all its apparent power -- could not handle the turns in the revolutionary struggle and would crash up on the first sharp zigzag in the road? And when the CPS did crash one would think that the designers of this machine

would conclude that it was time to go back to the drawing board and reexamine the original plans.

But not Togliatti. Amazingly, he drew no general conclusion about the line that the CPS followed. All the grave and fatal weaknesses that he is compelled to take note of are treated as isolated mistakes of the Spanish comrades. Meanwhile, he declares the general orientation of the CPS to have been one hundred per cent correct. "The general political line of the Communist Party..." Togliatti sums up, "emerged fully confirmed by the Spanish experience." (May 21, 1939)

This is absurd. These failings of the CPS were mere symptoms of a fatal disease. They were brought on by the anti-Leninist virus of bourgeois democratic opportunism and liquidationist merger with reformism and social-democracy. This is something which became an epidemic within the world communist movement with the new line adopted at the 7th Congress of the Communist International of 1935.

Today, the modern revisionist parties, from the CP of Spain to the CPUSA, are reformist and impotent lackeys of the capitalist rulers. They are rotting hulks of what were once fighting communist parties. And one of the ideological crutches that they fall back on is that their treachery to the working class has precedent in the line followed in the Spanish Civil war.

Unfortunately, even forces that had declared their opposition to revisionism and their loyalty to Marxism-Leninism are likewise reaching back into this history in order to justify their current rightist and petty bourgeois democratic views. The Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist) is such a case. It speaks vaguely (even less than Togliatti did but in the same spirit) about the mis-

takes of the CPS during the civil war. Meanwhile, it holds up the general policy of the CPS in this period as a model of tactics for all. In particular, it raises this example as a model for its own liquidationist scheming for becoming overnight a party of millions and an "alternative to power." But, what was a tragedy in the Spain of the 1930's is a miserable farce in the Spain of the 1980's. (See "The Spanish Civil War and problems in the present-day movement in Spain" and "On the line of the CP of Spain/ML" in The Supplement of October 15, 1986.)

A Togliatti-type critique simply won't do. The heroic struggle of the workers and communists in the Spanish revolution and civil war is a valuable legacy of the proletarians and Marxist-Leninists the world over. But to honor this legacy and make its lessons useful for the present-day movement, we must examine this experience with a critical Marxist eye. Despite all the heroic self-sacrifice and all the blood that was shed, we cannot simply repeat the slogans and policies of those days. Because as we have seen, these policies cost the communists and anti-fascist masses dearly. Indeed, the great battleground of the Spanish Civil War showed that the new line of the CI, which guided the CPS, was grievously wrong.

For the Marxist-Leninist communists to build up their proletarian parties, to build up the revolutionary movement, and to prepare the working class for the revolutions and civil wars of our time, we must learn from the invaluable experience of the proletarian movement. To be successful in this, however, we must inoculate ourselves from what was wrong and anti-Leninist, rebuilding the revolutionary movement on the solid ground of Marxism-Leninism. <>