

The Communist Movement in Spain

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Supplementing the general informative letter from Spain in the last issue, we publish below a thoro, if somewhat concise and condensed, political analysis of the Communist movement in Spain, its various tendencies and groups.

This material has been sent as official report to the International Communist Opposition Conference.—Editor.

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I.—The Official Communist Party

The center of the official Communist Party of Spain, Section of the Communist International, is Madrid, the capital of the country. Its main strength is in Madrid, in the mining regions of Biscay and in Andalusia. Its total membership is small. The recent letter of the Communist International credits it with 10,000 members, certainly a big exaggeration. The press of the Catalanian Communist Federation declares the C.P.S. has between 3,000 and 5,000 members, probably much nearer to the truth. It underwent a rapid growth immediately after the revolution (April 1931) but this proved temporary since it was followed by a period of decline, which still continues today.

The C.P.S. has proved absolutely incapable of solving any of the great problems posed by the revolution. It has given no answer or an incorrect answer to the following basic questions: the character of the revolution, the next steps in the development of the revolution, the national question, the trade union question, inner life of the Party. The sterility and false course of the C.P.S. reflect similar conditions in the Executive of the Comintern, in spite of the latter's attempts to dodge all responsibility.

In the name of "proletarian unity" the official Party is pursuing a mad course of splitting tactics in the trade unions, proposing to "unite" all forces in a new trade union "unity" center, distinct from the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (C.N.T., dominated by the anarcho-syndicalists) and the Union General de Trabajadores (U.G.T., dominated by the Social-democrats). Altho these two organizations have between them over a million and a half of workers (the C.N.T. has about 800,000 members, while the U.G.T., favored by the government, is slightly larger), and contain virtually all organized workers in Spain, the official Party does not hesitate to attempt to set up another trade union organization against them!

The C.P.S. today is run by the notorious Lenin School "experts" and a clique of impotent, self-perpetuating puppet functionaries. It is at present in an acute crisis; within it a new opposition is developing, constituting the majority in Madrid and other places. The Party has just received an open letter from the Comintern, making the Spanish leaders into scapegoats for all errors, both of the Central Committee and of the E.C.C.I., on the Spanish question.

There is the usual regime of bluffs. The Spanish Party leads all manifestations and movements in the columns of the *Paris Humanité* and the *Moscow Pravda*, much to the astonishment and indignation of the local participants when the stories are translated in the Spanish press.

II.—The "Left Opposition"—The Trotskyites.

The Trotskyist "Left Opposition" constitutes an incredibly insignificant sect in Spain. They are a handful (the Spanish letter in the last issue of the *Age* places their number at about 300—Editor) of phrasemongers, waiting for the proletarian dictatorship to arrive in Spain and doing nothing about it. Trotsky originally had great influence among the Spanish syndicalists because of his special work in the years 1917-1921 in winning syndicalists for the Russian Revolution. But the events of the one year of revolution have completely undermined his pre-revolutionary influence. Today, neither he nor his pedantic disciples in Spain, have any influence upon the organizations of the workers or upon the course of events.

It is interesting to note that Trotsky himself has made several major errors in his estimate of the Spanish revolution. On the eve of the fall of the dictatorship and the monarchy he declared (January 24, 1931):

"A combination of circumstances is possible, to be sure, in which the possessing classes are compelled to sacrifice the monarchy in order to save themselves (example: Germany!). However it is quite likely that the Madrid monarchy, even tho its eyes are blackened, will survive until the dictatorship of the proletariat."

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III.—The Communist Federation.

The center of the Federación Comunista Cataluna-Balear (Catalonian-Balearic Communist Federation, F.C.C.-B) is Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. Its first congress was held on March 1, 1931 and its second on April 2, 1932. It broke with or was expelled from the Communist Party over two years ago for reasons emerging from the general crisis in the Communist International and from the development within the C.I. an ultra-left course and un-Leninist system of leadership. The crisis in Spain was complicated considerably by the peculiarities of the national question in Spain and by disputes over the role of the Worker-Peasant Block.

The present membership of the

Federation is about 10,000, located mostly in Barcelona and surrounding Catalanian region (Catalonia is the industrialized region of Spain). At the second congress held in April of this year, the Federation voted to change its name to Federación Comunista Iberica (Iberian Communist Federation, I.C.F.) and to seek to extend its influence and organization thruout the Iberian peninsula or, at any rate, thruout Spain. (The Iberian peninsula also includes Portugal.) The secretary of the organization is J. Maurin.

It publishes a central organ, *La Batalla*, a weekly (in the Castilian dialect) and several other papers, with circulation largely in Catalonia.

The course of the I.C.F. is in general correct, certainly far more correct than that of the official C.P. of the Trotsky group.

1. *General political outlook.* In its zeal to develop an indigenous movement on the basis of a study of the Spanish political and economic situation and in its anxiety to eliminate mechanical copying of ready-made formulas from Moscow or Germany or Prinkipo, the Federation is the only healthy Communist group in Spain. Its estimation of the character of the Spanish revolution is superior to that of the official Party or the Trotskyites. Originally Maurin advanced the formula: "Democratic Federal Republic" as the broadest rallying slogan against the monarchy and the dictatorship. This formula is, to say the least, equivocal but its interpretation in theory and practise, since the fall of the monarchy, has been Communist in character. This formula has itself receded into history in favor of the estimate that Spain has at present to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution and only the rule of the workers and peasants is capable of doing so.

But in Maurin's view (expressed in his book on the Spanish revolution) that the rule of the workers can be exercised in Spain thru the trade unions without bodies equivalent to the soviets, there seems to be a trace of syndicalism. The argument is that soviets do not exist in Spain, that soviets are a Russian institution appropriate to a country with weak illegal unions, that Spain has an old union tradition, and so on. Maurin writes: "The union in Spain . . . is at the same time an economic organization, a political and a revolutionary fortress . . . The union and the factory committee are the embryos of the proletarian power." The addition of factory committees, on which increasing stress is being laid, broadens the concept but still leaves it stamped with some syndicalist shortcomings.

2. *The trade union question.* The I.C.F. stands solid against the splitting tactics of the official Party and of the E.C.C.I. It proposes the united front of the C.N.T. unions (with chief strength in Catalonia) and its own Worker-Peasant Block. It pays little attention, however, to the Socialist-controlled U.G.T., except to expose its reformist leadership and to acclaim the signs of increasing rank and file radicalization. It is clear that a truly national Communist Party would have to work in both the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. and aim at the ultimate unity of both.

3. *Mass work.* The I.C.F. seems to be uncertain whether it or the larger Bloque Obrero y Campesino (Worker-Peasant Block, B.O.C.) is eventual-

ly to be considered as the real Communist Party. The Federation describes itself as the vanguard of conscious Communists but the B.O.C. is also referred to as Communist. Both declarations are usually issued by jointly. *La Batalla* acts as the organ of both and describes itself as a 'Communist weekly.' The B.O.C. is regarded as a sort of permanent united front, Communist in tendency, accepting only sympathizers with Communism or at least appealing only to those who are willing to join an organization openly sympathetic with Communism.

4. *The national question.* The I.C.F. has the best stand on this question. The anarcho-syndicalists take a nihilistic attitude towards it by their indifference giving to the bourgeoisie leadership over the national movement, which is especially strong in Catalonia. The Socialists, playing the game of the bourgeois republican, regard it as a simple "administrative-juridical adjustment of the structure of the Spanish republic", with a certain amount of formal autonomy, after the fashion of a State in the U.S.A. "The Catalanian problem is not rooted in the class struggle," they declare.

The Trotskyites recognize the problem but in place of analyzing its peculiarities, they talk of Chiang Kai-shek and of the Kuomintang. They favor Communist support of the nationalist movement in such regions where it can be led by the proletariat but are apparently not interested in the movement where it obviously represents a petty bourgeois movement and where the proletariat is yet weak. The official Party places the question abstractly in purely general terms, tipping its hat to the general formula of "self-determination with the right of secession" and then forgetting it altogether in its daily agitation . . .

The I.C.F. carries on a constant day-to-day agitation on this subject, fighting to wrest the hegemony of the nationalist movement of Catalonia from the Catalanian bourgeoisie and exposing the treachery and vacillation of the latter. It naturally has limited its concrete activity largely to Catalonia but recognizes and proposes fraternal aid to the movements in Frisco, Galicia and other regions. It puts the freedom of Morocco on the same basis and agitates for a Union of Socialist Republics of Iberia. There may be a slight tendency to "federalism" in Party matters, while it is certain that Morocco must be put on a different plane from the Biscayan, Galician and Catalanian movements.

5. *Communist unity and the Comintern.* There are elements of confusion in the position of the I.C.F. on this question. The Federation and the Worker-Peasant Block have defended themselves well against official slanders, split campaigns and fake unity manouvers. They have rightly insisted on the restoration of Party democracy and have maintained democracy in their own ranks. They have preserved a thoroly Communist orientation and their interest in international Communist matters. They have been fairly steady in the publication of material in favor of the Soviet Union and so on.

But on the question of Communist unity they insist that unity is possible only on the basis of the acceptance of the program of the Federation and of the Worker-Peasant Block and around their organization as a basis. They also insist that the B.O.C. must be maintained.

THE RISE OF ITALIAN FASCISM

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moralization of the bourgeoisie and of the government circles, such a course would have been suicidal and Giolitti understood this well. He began to "negotiate" with the employers and the trade unions and arrived at an "agreement" which involved the "control of production" in the factory by a committee of nine, 6 workers and three employees. The workers soon realized that they had been tricked and the mood of profound disillusionment became dominant. From this point the movement fell rapidly away; the high point had been reached and passed. The attitude of the Socialist party and trade union leaders became ever more cowardly and conciliatory to the bourgeoisie and the demoralization of the labor movement deepened and spread.

The Fascists had supported the proposal of the seizure of the factories as "a justified measure!" But in the crisis they utilized the confusion and the weakening of the labor movement for a broad offensive. Mussolini placed his battalions at the disposal of the capitalists. From November 1920 on, hardly a day passed without acts of Fascist terror against Communists, Socialists and trade unionists, without attacks on trade union offices, publishing houses, chambers of labor, meetings and demonstrations. The Fascists distinguished themselves particularly in the service they rendered to the great landowners against the small peasants and the agricultural workers. To a certain extent a Fascist mass movement was first established on the countryside and only then did it begin to penetrate the cities. Nuclei were established in factories and even in unions. It proved possible for the

Fascists to cripple, by external attacks and internal disruption, the most powerful union in the country, the railwaymen's organization.

It was at this time that Mussolini formed his notorious alliance with the powerful Italian employers association, *Confederazione Generale dell'Industria*. A secret joint committee was established with the following aims: (1) the organized placing of Fascists in the factories (this operated very much to help the growth of the Fascists in view of the severe crisis of 1921); and (2) direct financial assistance.

Fascist trade unions began to be fostered in the factories, languishing at first but growing rapidly in the economic crisis. The organizer of these unions was Edmondo Rossoni, a former syndicalist who had issued the following slogan during the war: "The fatherland must not be denied, it must be won!" In January 1922 the National Labor League was formed out of a number of anti-strike, really strikebreaking, "unions" and affiliated to the Fascists. After the seizure of power, it was planned that these unions would embrace both employers and employed in the same divisions, altho this idea met with considerable resistance on the part of the employers. The fundamental principles of the Fascist trade union movement were already laid down by the middle of 1922! Not class struggle but the collaboration of classes; private property is essential because "the State cannot exercise the necessary initiative"; the employers must not "utilize their position of power to oppress the workers"; strikes are permissible "if they do not touch the existence of society;" the general strike is immoral since it is aimed against the State."