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December 1937

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From Solidaridad (organ of the Uruguayan FORU), 2nd  
fortnight in December 1937. taken from Manuel Azaretto Las  
pendientes resbaladizas (Montivideo 1939)

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# The USSR and the CNT

an unconscionable stance

Alexander Schapiro

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**It is with growing sadness and sense of poignant woundedness that one reads, today and for some time since, Solidaridad Obrera, the CNT's mouthpiece. One cannot avoid this conclusion- that this daily paper, with its print run of a quarter of a million copies daily, has turned into a semi-official daily of the USSR.**

One need only leaf through the pages of our anti-bolshevik Soli to find it crammed with articles supporting the USSR and Stalin's foreign policy, without the slightest hint of disagreement surfacing to lesson that impression.

We need only leaf through a dozen issues of Soli of late on the USSR's stance in Geneva and Nyon

'The world proletariat should back the USSR's stance once and for all', says one appeal on 9 September, whilst the editorial of the same edition declares that 'all of the free men in the world should back the USSR's demands' and, to ram this view home, another appeal proclaims that there is 'but one way to strengthen the USSR's resolute position: which is world-wide worker action in concert with the soviet proletariat'. The next day we find Soli opining that 'the proletariat awaits a sign

from Russia'. By a coincidence that cannot but raise a smile, a headline on the same page says 'Machiavelli, the inspiration of Italy and Germany...'; carelessly forgetting, of course, to add the USSR, that accomplished disciple of the Italian philosopher.

One day later, on 11 September, Soli announces that the CNT national committee is sending its representative to join the Commission (set up by The Friends of the USSR) to mark the 20th anniversary of the USSR.

A few days on, and it is 'the Madrid CNT which is taking part in the tribute to the Soviet Union'. In Soli of 12 September, it is boasted that 'Spain, barred from Nyon by European diplomats, is to take up her place again, thanks to the advocacy of the USSR' and on 18 September Soli offers a portrait of 'comrade' (huh?) Ovseenko on the occasion of his appointment to the post of minister of Justice in the USSR.

But even as Soli and the CNT were furnishing ample evidence of their attachment to the USSR, its government and its representatives in Nyon and in Barcelona, neither is sparing in it sometimes vitriolic criticisms of the PSUC, which is the Communist Party of Catalonia, a branch of the Third International, wholly subject to the orders of that self-same government of the USSR. A paradox that highlights the tragedy of a situation whereby the CNT is compelled to play this double game: simultaneously backing Moscow whilst attacking its Spanish agent, the PSUC.

Willy-nilly, this poses the question: in which occasion are the CNT and Soli sincere, and which not? To be sure, the USSR does sell her war materials to Republican Spain. We say 'sell', because it has been authenticated that not one kilo of weapons has been despatched by Stalin except against a money payment... or payment in kind. Let us reprint what L. V. has written on this point in Geneva's *Le Réveil*:

"Our friends have invoked aid from Russia. There is no way that Moscow's representatives may be

attacked, because Moscow's material support, in view of the shameful dereliction of the democratic capitalist states, and above all the cowardice on the part of the proletariat of those countries who are deceived by their leaders, is absolutely indispensable if any chance of beating the fascist troops was to be retained! But why not spell it out bluntly: Russia has sent us arms of such and such a quality and in such and such quantities. And in return, Spain has given her everything, and what is more, the Soviet leadership has imposed certain conditions and submitted certain demands in terms of domestic policy. Why then acknowledge soviet aid and not admit the quid pro quo imposed by Moscow and accepted by Valencia? The anarchist organisations have been played for suckers and have been the victims and accomplices of this unconscionable hypocrisy."

Indeed, this unconscionable hypocrisy is still carrying on day after day in Soli and externalised in the CNT's policy of flirtation with the USSR makes them direct accomplices of the political by which so-called 'republican Spain, and above all, Catalonia is currently beset. We ask yet again: Which of the CNT's attitudes is the sincere one? The justified criticism of the PSUC or the equally unjustified admiration of the government of the USSR and its representatives abroad, Litvinov and Ovseenko? Or is the CNT sincere in both instances? Or insincere? Here? or there?

Whatever answer the CNT may devise to these questions, two facts remain: the Moscow government is wondrously exploiting the CNT's silences in order to undermine its foundations, as the CNT is unwillingly turned into an accessory of the anti-revolutionary and capitalist-democratic policy which Moscow is unceasingly pursuing. The CNT, up to its neck in

unthinking support of a government of assassins, support paid for in its blood in order to secure arms deliveries that are used in a war that is not at all antifascist, will some day be obliged to cease its attacks upon the Spanish Communists. Because there is no logic in supporting a government whilst being unwilling to back its political representatives.

Our Spanish comrades may well retort that their support is not for the USSR's government, but for the Russian proletariat; that their participation in the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the USSR implies merely their appreciation of the October Revolution. Which would be dishonest. Not for many years now have we had any news of the Russian proletariat (it having no organ through which to express itself). Appreciation of the October Revolution, which we all have not ceased celebrating ever since 1917, does not at all require - indeed, the very opposite - collaboration with those who were the very ones who strangled that revolution.

This unconscionable hypocrisy must cease. Moscow is in the throes of selling to England at a knock-down price whatever is left of the Spanish Revolution of 19 July 1936.

Let us not be accomplices in this betrayal, through the moral support that Soli and the CNT afford to Stalinist politicians. The PSUC is merely carrying out its orders from Moscow. Our stance with regard to Moscow should be the same. They being equally stranglers of the Spanish Revolution, we should publicly condemn them both.