

# **Class War in Spain**

**The Writings of Camillo Berneri 1936-1937**

Camillo Berneri, Frank Mintz

1978

# Contents

Preface by Frank Mintz . . . . .	3
Camillo Berneri by Frank Mintz . . . . .	4
Writings of Camilo Berneri . . . . .	7
Unpublished letter on militarisation, October, 1936 . . . . .	7
The State and the Classes . . . . .	8
The Abolition and Extinction of the State . . . . .	11
What can we do? . . . . .	14
Dictatorship of the Proletariat and State Socialism . . . . .	15
Beware, Dangerous Corner! . . . . .	17
Madrid, sublime city . . . . .	19
Between the war and the Revolution . . . . .	20
The Third Stage . . . . .	22
The Wisdom of a Proverb . . . . .	25
Problems of the Revolution: the City and the Country . . . . .	27
Open letter to comrade Federica Montseny . . . . .	30
War and Revolution . . . . .	34
Counter Revolution on the March . . . . .	36
Interview in Spain and the World . . . . .	38
The Death of Berneri by Frank Mintz . . . . .	40
1937-1977: Four Decades without a History by Frank Mintz . . . . .	41

## Preface by Frank Mintz

French: Garantir la révolution

(Sources of information and quotations: U. Marzocchi and V. Rabitti, *Umanita Nova* 16th July 1966; U. Fedeli, *Adunata dei Refrattari*, December 1961; *Pensieri e Battaglie* 1938.)

”To guarantee revolution, it is not enough for the mob to be armed or for them to have expropriated the bourgeoisie: it is necessary for them to destroy the capitalist system entirely and to organise their own system. They must be able to combat the ideas put forward by Stalinist and reformist leaders with the same vigour with which they attack capitalist individuals and the leaders of the bourgeois parties. As of May 1937, any revolutionary endeavour that does not remain faithful to this experience condemns itself purely and simply to not existing. Attacking the state, unhesitatingly confronting the Stalino-reformist counter-revolution: such are the distinctive characteristics of the coming revolution.”

These extracts from the secret republication in Spanish of Berneri’s writings in 1973 by the Iberian Liberation Movement (whose symbolic figure is Pulg Antich who was garrotted on 2nd March 1974) explain the reason for the publication of these writings.

We have added some pages of Berneri’s from this period which best reveal his thoughts on Marxism and the militias.

It is necessary to know that Berneri and numerous other Italian anarchists and anti-fascists made their way to Spain to fight weapon in hand.

Having arrived on 29th July 1936, on 7th August Berneri put forward his plan for an Italian column composed of anarchists, independent socialists (*Giustizia e Liberta*), communists, monarchists and republicans. On 17th August the column was formed (text in *L’Autogestion dans l’Espagne revolutionnaire* p.278). The next day, the column set out for Aragon with 130 men. It eventually contained about 450. On the 28th they received their baptism of fire at Monte Pelado, which they held despite their numerical inferiority.

Beneri was sometimes at the Front, sometimes in Barcelona to organise the column and propaganda. And as of October 1936, with the appearance of *Guerra di Classe*, he settled in Barcelona, without completely ending his contact with the Front in person.

So Berneri was at one and the same time fighting with the rifle and with the pen. The reformist course of the Revolution was bringing ever stronger pressure to bear: ‘Spending from 20 to 22 hours on end immersed in political and military problems inevitably results in a sort of mental nausea..’ (16th January, 1937); ‘Issue Number 8 of *Guerra di Classe* will appear when it can. The Committee (CNT-FAI) has dealt with it in the same way as with *L’Espagne Anti-fasciste*<sup>1</sup> and I don’t want to be accused.’ (February 1937).

Beneri’s articles reflect the feelings of the anarchists–Spaniards and foreigners—who volunteered to sacrifice their lives for anti-hierarchical social change and for the benefit of all workers and not for the patriotic and republican demagogy of the privileged.

---

<sup>1</sup> This was the magazine of Prudhommeaux and his comrades in Barcelona. To avoid CNT censorship, they had to return to Beziers in France.

## Camillo Berneri by Frank Mintz

Born in Lodi on 28th May 1897, he spent his childhood at Reggio Emilia and was active in a Socialist youth group. He decided to resign by sending an open letter which caused some disturbance: "...the Socialist movement has started on a disastrous descent towards the depths of destructive egoism, thus following in the path of the moral strength of Christianity, which grew strong thanks to its martyrs and fell into decay when the sacrifices of its followers ceased." "We need a new burst of energy, we must return to a time when to love an idea meant not to fear death and to sacrifice one's whole life to total submission." (1915). This deep, militant commitment which one meets again and again right up until his assassination was never, however, a blind faith, as we shall see.

In 1917 he was drafted. Did he want to be an objector or desert? "There are occasions when to get oneself killed is the most logical solution, and to get oneself killed becomes a moral necessity. Cases of conscience are more terrible than Austrian bullets or asphyxiating gases." "One fights and one dies. Violets grow on the blood-soaked earth, along the ditches of red water."

After the war he finished his studies while very actively involved in the anarchist press. He became a humanities teacher in a high school.. The coming of the Fascist regime and his refusal to give any loyalty as a civil servant to this regime meant that he had to go into exile.

Thus began a long series of arrests and expulsions from France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland, to which were added the usual problems of political exiles: arguments, fits of enthusiasm disappointments, spying etc. "I dreamt of building a solid and spacious edifice, but I have found out that my energy is short-lived: I have weighed my brain, X-rayed my heart and I feel that I am sometimes vile and sometimes proud. I wonder whether my political activity is no more than a pointless stirring of the dry leaves of an ideology in decline. My faith which was a fine, tender and rich green is now brown like the vines in autumn."

Beneri was living with his wife and two daughters who were in France. In 1930 he wrote from a Belgian prison to his daughter Giliana: "One day you will perhaps understand how much papa loved your mother and you two, although he so often made her suffer, and although he has not been so affectionate with you." (written in French).

But despite these physical and moral obstacles, Berneri was intellectually fully active: "The curious thing is that on the one hand I am compelled towards militant politics, and on the other hand, in the field of culture, my preferred studies are either of a most peculiar erudition (I have squandered so much time on stupid things: psychology, zoology, telepathy etc) or extremely abstract (I have a large book of material on Finalism). The result is a general unease." (Letter to Luigi Fabbri, September 1929).

"The more I read our press the more I think I am dreaming. You know that I can't help it and that I hardly agree with anyone. (...) As for the unions, I believe that it is the only area in which we could build anything, although I cannot accept union officials and I can clearly see drawbacks and dangers in anarcho-syndicalism in practice. If I blame individual-ism, it is because, although less important numerically, it has succeeded in influencing virtually all of the movement. (...) My dream is to instigate the investigation of a long succession of problems, and then, by collecting together critical remarks, annotations. solutions etc., from the people who will be discussing them, to arrive at a programme for 1932 or 1933, to put it forward as the programme

of a group of anarchists who will let others live in peace but who wish to advance by a route of their own.”

(Letter to Luigi Fabbri, July 1930).

It does not seem that this project saw the light of day. On the other hand, Berneri wrote numerous articles and anti-religious leaflets on the emancipation of women. He also put forward a theory which was published as 'The Anti-Semitic Jew' in which he studied the compulsory or voluntary assimilation of the Jews. André Spire, poet and Zionist, judged the book to be "of primary importance."

But his most important writings were 'Fascist Espionage Abroad' (in Italian) and 'Mussolini and the Conquest of the Balearic Islands,' and his militant articles from which we shall give three quotations which seem to sum up Berneri before his arrival as a volunteer in Spain.

"Happily the Masonic phenomenon is completely negligible in the Italian anarchist camp. But there has been a considerable minority of anarchists who, enticed by the hope of 'extreme measures,' have allowed themselves to be drawn into the political games of this ambiguous form of anti-fascism." "Freemasonry supports any movement which can help the bourgeoisie and fights any that might harm it."

"It is necessary to leave romanticism behind. To see the masses, I would say, in perspective.

"There is no such thing as the people, a homogeneous entity, but crowds, varied and separated into categories. There is no revolutionary will of the masses, but revolutionary movements in which the masses are an enormous lever. (...) If we wish to arrive at a potential reconsideration of our revolutionary strength, which is not insignificant, we must get rid of our ideological apriorisms, and of the habit of putting things off until a future date that is convenient for settling problems of tactics and reconstruction. I say reconstruction because the greatest danger of the halting and deviation of the revolution lies in the conservative tendency of the masses."

(1930).

"To wait for the people to awake, to talk of mass action, to reduce the anti-fascist struggle to the development and maintenance of the ranks of the party and the union instead of concentrating one's means and one's will on revolutionary action, which alone can change this atmosphere of moral degradation in which the Italian proletariat is in the process of becoming entirely corrupted, is despicable, it is sheer idiocy and an act of betrayal"

(1934, end of 'Worker-idolatry')

At the news of the uprising in Spain, Berneri and the majority of the Italian anti-fascists made their way there immediately. They formed a column which was to be integrated in the Ascaso column on the Aragon Front, organised by Berneri and Carlo Rosselli (a left-wing Socialist). Berneri

took part in the battle of Monte Pelado (28th August, 1936)–“We defended the position with 130 against roughly 600 trained and well equipped men, and that in four hours of fighting”–and of Huesca (3rd September 1936)

He ended up devoting himself mainly to propaganda without stopping occupying himself with the Italian column. He ran the magazine '*Guerra di Classe*' (in Italian) and spoke on the CNT/FAI radio in transmissions to Italy. The book '*Pensieri e battaglie*' (Paris 1938) gives us a certain number of comments on the situation which Berneri noted down. One can see how they clarify his articles as regards the danger of a communist putsch and the strained relationships with the anarchist governmentals.

”One group of people really get on my nerves, it is the volunteers who have come as observers (French for the most part). They come here with the airs of priests and got up like cowboys to spend half the time in cafés.”

(21st September, 1936).

”The article in Number 6 has irritated the Consul General of the USSR in Barcelona, who has asked the regional committee (of the CNT) if they approved it. I don't know what they replied.”

(January 1937).

”Issue Number 8 of '*Guerra di Classe*' will appear when it can. The Committee (regional committee of the CNT) has dealt with it in the same way as with 'L'Espagne Anti-fasciste'[\*] and I don't want to be accused. However, it did distress me slightly. I shall make up for it by contributing to magazines and I shall write some pamphlets.”

(February 1937).

”For some time we have often had sufferers in our camp because of the Stalinists.”

(January 1937).

”Giopp has been released because of the intention of Espla and Arieto, but his case is serious, and they have escorted him and made him leave by plane for fear of a dirty trick by the Communist Cheka which is in command at Valnecia.” (...) ”I cannot see when I shall finish the pamphlet about the Balearics (which I am forcing myself to work on despite my misgivings!) in order to be able to start an avalanche of articles on the situation here which is in danger of being upset by the Bolshies!”

(March 1937).

”I who am not generally afraid in the face of danger, I am sometimes seized by a fear of death without there being any particularly objective reason.”

(letter to his wife, 25th April, 1937).

Ten days later, on 5th May 1937, Berneri and Barbieri, both anarchists, were arrested at home by ten armed plain-clothes policemen on the charge of being 'counter-revolutionaries' At Barbieri's protests, one policeman took out his card, No. 1109 (noted by Barbieri's wife). [Web maintainers note: Both were murdered later that day]

Beneri's last two works were 'Us and the POUM' published by an Italian anarchist paper in New York, without doubt because of the critical defence Berneri wrote was not publishable in Spain in April-May 1937; and a speech of 3rd May 1937 on the CNT/FAI radio to Italy on the occasion of the death of Gramsci, 'the tenacious and dignified militant who was our opponent, Antonio Gramsci, convinced that he laid hid a stone in the construction of the new society.'

(This biography based largely on Israel Renof's in 'Noir er Rouge' replaces Luigi Fabbri's over-sentimental one).

Although the name of Camillo Berneri was united fraternally with that of Francisco Barbieri by their deaths, this anarchist comrade is rarely introduced.

Born 11th November 1895 in Briattica in the province of Catanzaro, Barbieri was active as an anarchist from his youth, and with the coming of Fascism, he emigrated to Argentina.

Argentina was in the midst of social disturbance: violent strikes repressed by the army (2,000 dead in Patagonia in 1921); powerful trade union organisations, of which FORA was anarcho-syndicalist. Barbieri meanwhile became involved in the ItaloArgentinian anarchist group of Severino di Giovanni which first attacked North American establishments with bombs at the time of the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, and then Fascist Italian firms. At the same time the group carried out several hold-ups to finance a secret press which in 1930 was to publish two volumes of 'Social Writings' by Elisee Reclus in Italian.

When di Giovanni and his comrades were arrested, Barbieri was able to make several compromising documents disappear and escape to Brazil from where he was expelled to Italy to be imprisoned. He succeeded in escaping and entering France. But, accused of suing false papers, he was imprisoned and expelled from France to Switzerland from where he was similarly expelled to arrive in Spain in October 1935. But, denounced by the Italian secret police who demanded his extradition, he passed secretly into Switzerland which is where he was when the events in Spain began. Barbieri reached Barcelona again, arriving there on 25th July 1936.

Because of illness, Barbieri found himself in Barcelona in May 1937 after having fought on the Huesca Front. (Information contained in part in the article by L. Mastrodicasa, 'Guerra di Classe', 23rd June, 1937).

Bound together by their death, Berneri and Barbieri illustrate two complementary aspects of anarchism: the unrelenting struggle against dictatorships and their ideologies.

- Magazine edited by Prudhommeaux who had to return to France to be able to publish without censorship.

## **Writings of Camilo Berneri**

### **Unpublished letter on militarisation, October, 1936**

French: A propos de la militarisation (lettre inédite)

Rosselli<sup>2</sup> envisages having the maximum contact between our column and the other (the Italian section of the International Brigades attached to the Communist Party. Translator's note), well I refuse it. But the important problem is that of the autonomy of our section, autonomy which Rosselli proposes, but which I do not find advisable, because it amounts to cutting off the majority of the section which we have formed from a militia responsive to our ideas; because I do not see how militarisation would exclude us when it did not succeed in separating us from the Ascaso column. It seems to me, therefore, easier to escape militarisation by remaining within the CNT and FAI militia, rather than submitting directly to the military command.

There remains the question of the development of the section. The Italian column of Albacete (the International Brigades' base. Translator's note) contains a thousand men, and there is also a column of Germans similarly organised by the communists who number 200. From a trustworthy source, we know that since the start some 8,000 Germans have entered Spain, commanded by 'Russian officers.' It is obvious that Madrid is organising its own 'Tercio': a foreign legion which, well armed and well commanded will be able to restore order. The increase in the police forces (guardias de asalto and guardias civiles) and the mass arrival of Moscow's Moroccans must give us pause for thought. All those who would be on our side in the event of any attempt to stifle the revolution can be considered as good allies. On the other hand I continue to consider useful the politically heterogeneous character of our column. Battistelli, to give only one example, is an ideal officer for a column such as ours, and S. would not be.

The more the war intensifies, the more the need to perfect the commanding ranks will increase. It seems to me in conclusion that the presence of non-anarchist elements in our column has been militarily and politically not negative.

Setting aside the breaking up of our column and our militia, the agreement between us and the members of Giustizia e Liberta could rest on these two points:

- 1) joint recruiting committees;
- 2) joint aid committees

It is up to you to examine and resolve this agreement.<sup>3</sup>

## The State and the Classes

*Guerra di Classe* No. 2 of 17th October 1936, page 4 and signed C.B.

French: L'Etat et les classes

Lenin in 1921 defined the Soviet Russian State as "a workers' state with a bureaucratic deformation in a country with a peasant majority." This definition must nowadays be modified in the following way: the Soviet State is a bureaucratic State where a bureaucratic middle class and a workers lower middle class are in the process of formation while the agrarian middle class still survives.

Boris Souvarin in his book on 'Stalin' (Paris 1935) gives this portrayal of the social appearance of the USSR:

"The so-called soviet society is based in just the same way on the exploitation of man by man, of the producer by the bureaucrat-technician of political power. Individual appropriation

---

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Rosselli and his brother were behind the 'Giustizia e Liberta' group which called for a united anti-fascist front for a Socialist Republic. Berneri followed their position closely. (Translator's note).

<sup>3</sup> Berneri was not involved in the column since he was running '*Guerra di Classe*'. The letter seems to be from October 1936. It was published in *Volontá*, 19th July 1951.



of surplus value is succeeded by a collective appropriation by the State, a parasitic deduction from consumption carried out by the bureaucracy...Official documents leave us in no doubt: the bureaucracy deducts an unwarranted portion from the work of the subject classes who are forced to undergo an unrelenting system of sweated labour, and which corresponds more or less to the old capitalist profit. Thus a new social category has formed around the Party, which is interested in the maintenance of the current order and in the perpetuation of the State whose extinction Lenin predicted as related to the disappearance of classes. If the Bolsheviks do not have the legal ownership of the instruments of production and means of exchange, they possess the machinery of the State, which allows them to carry out all these acts of plunder in different ways. The possibility of imposing sale prices that are much higher than cost prices contains the true secret of bureaucratic-technical exploitation which is characterised besides this by administrative and military oppression.”

Bonapartism is no more than the political reflection of the tendency of this new bourgeoisie to conserve and enhance its own socio-economic situation. In the appeal to the world proletariat by the Bolshevik Leninist Tambov of 1935, one can read:

”The aim of the party bureaucracy consists solely of the isolation and torture of opponents so that they never publicly become useless, that is to say unfortunate apolitical beings. The bureaucrat, in fact, does not wish you to be a true Communist. He does not need that. For him that is harmful and mortally dangerous. The bureaucrat does not want independent Communists, he wants miserable slaves, egoists and citizens of the worst sort...”

”It would thus be possible that under a true proletarian power, the struggle against bureaucracy, against the thieves and brigands who impudently appropriate the goods of the soviets and who are the cause of the loss of thousands of men through cold and famine, it would be possible that a struggle or a simple protest would be considered as a counterrevolutionary offence?”

The cruel struggle between the 'revolutionary' oppositions and 'conservative' orthodoxy is a phenomenon that is quite natural in the setting of State Socialism. The Leninist opposition has good reason to point out to the world proletariat the deformities and degeneracy's of Stalinism, but if the opposition's diagnosis is almost always correct, the aetiology is almost always inadequate. Stalinism is only the consequence of the Leninist set up of the political problem of the Social Revolution. To oppose the effects without going back to the causes, to the original sin of Bolshevism (bureaucratic dictatorship as a function of dictatorship of the Party), is equivalent to arbitrarily simplifying the chain of causality which leads from the dictatorship of Lenin without any great breaks in continuity. Liberty within a party which denies the free play of competition among the progressive parties within the soviet system would today be a spectacular miracle. Workers' hegemony, Bolshevik absolutism, State Socialism, industrial fetishism: these seeds of corruption could only produce poisoned fruit such as the absolutism of a faction and the hegemony of a class.

Trotsky in the role of Saint George struggling with the Stalinist dragon cannot make us forget the Trotsky of Kronstadt. The responsibility for current Stalinism goes back to the formulation and practice of the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party in the same way as to the illusion of the extinction of the State as a fruit of the disappearance of classes under the influence of State Socialism.

When Trotsky wrote (6th December, 1935): ”The historical absurdity of autocratic bureaucracy in a classless society cannot be sustained and will not be sustained indefinitely,” he was saying an absurd thing about the 'historical absurdity.' In history there is no absurdity. An autocratic

bureaucracy is a class, therefore it is not absurd that it should exist in a society where classes remain the bureaucratic class and the proletarian class. If the USSR was a 'classless' society, it would also be a society without a bureaucratic autocracy, which is the natural fruit of the permanent existence of the State.

It is because of its function as the party controlling the State machine that the Bolshevik Party became a centre of attraction for careerist petty bourgeois elements and for lazy and opportunist workers.

The bureaucratic wound has not been opened and infected by Stalinism: it is contemporaneous with the Bolshevik dictatorship.

Here are some news items from 1918 and 1919, published by the Bolshevik press. 'Vetsertsia Isvestia' of 23rd August 1918 talking of the disorganisation of the postal service, states that despite the 60% decrease in correspondence the number of employees had increased by 100% compared to the period before the Revolution.

'Pravda' of 11th February 1919 points out the continual creation of new offices, of new bureaucratic institutions, for which officials are named and remunerated before these new institutions begin to operate. "And all these new employees," says 'Pravda' of 22nd February 1919, "overrun and occupy entire palaces, when, seeing their number, a few rooms would be enough."

Work is slow and obstructionist, even in offices with industrial functions. "An employee of the Commisariat of Lipetzk," relates 'Isvestia' of 29th November 1918, "in order to buy nine boxes of nails at the price of 417 roubles had to fill in twenty forms, obtain ten orders and thirteen signatures, and he had to wait two days to get them as the bureaucrats who should have signed could not be found."

'Pravda' (No.281) denounced "the invasion of our Party by petty bourgeois elements" and complaints about requisitions "of a Selfish nature." In the 2nd March 1919 issue, the same paper states "We must recognise that recently comrades who are in the Communist Party for their first year have begun to make use of methods that are inadmissible in our Party. Making it their duty not to take any notice of the advice of local organisations, believing themselves charged to act personally on the basis of their rather limited authority, they order and command without rhyme or reason. From this comes the latent discontent between the centre and the periphery, a succession of abuses provoked by the individual dictatorship."

Speaking of the province of Pensa, the Commissary of the Interior Narkomvnutel said, "The local representatives of the central government behave not like representatives of the proletariat, but like true dictators. A series of facts and proofs that these strange representatives go armed to the poorest of people, taking from them the necessities of life, threatening to kill them, and when they protest, they beat them with sticks. The possessions they have thus requisitioned are resold, and with the money they receive, they organise scenes of drunkenness and orgies."

Another Bolshevik, Meserikov, wrote, "each one of us sees each day innumerable cases of violence, of abuse of power, of corruption, of laziness etc. All of us know that into our soviet institutions, cretins and incompetents have entered en masse. We all regret their presence in the ranks of the Party, but we do nothing to clean ourselves of these impurities..." "...If an institution chases out an incompetent, they straight away find another to replace him, and they entrust him with a responsible post. Often instead of punishment he gets promotion." (*Pravda*, 5th February 1919).

In a speech given at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (11th-12th March 1919) Lenin acknowledged, "There are here and there careerists, soldiers of fortune who have

fastened on to us. They call themselves Communists, but in reality they seek only to deceive us as to their true ideas. They have 'stuck' themselves to us because we are in power, and because the most honest bureaucratic elements refuse to collaborate with us because of their backward ideas, whereas these others' do not even have honest ideas, they are merely climbers."

The Bolshevik government revealed itself to be powerless in the face of a bureaucracy which is super-abundant, parasitic, despotic and dishonest.

Five million bureaucrats became nearly ten million. In 1925 there were 400,000 officials in the Co-operation (*Pravda* 20th April, 1926), In 1927 the Russian Federation of Food Workers had some 4,287 officials for 451,720 members, and the Moscow Metalworkers Union some 700 officials for 130,000 union cards. (*Truda* 12th June 1928).

This plethoric bureaucracy does not correspond to intense and efficient administrative activity. "The directorate of the soviet system from the bottom to the highest degree has a function of paper-shuffling. The provincial committee usually sends out one or two circulars every day on every possible and imaginable question and judges that it has thus fulfilled its obligations." "The number of circulars giving directives which are received by local cells varies between 30 and 100 monthly." (*Pravda*, 7th June 1925).

A top official, Dzerjinsky wrote, "They demand from enterprises the most varied sort of information, reports and statistical facts, which in our system form a torrent of paper which obliges us to employ an excessive number of personnel and damages our real work; a sea of paper is created in which hundreds of people are lost; the situation of accountability and statistics is quite simply catastrophic; businesses wearily support the burden of supplying information on tens and hundreds of different forms, now they measure accountability in pouds." (One poud = 16,380 kg). (*Pravda*, 23rd June 1926).

+++

This phenomenon of the reconstitution of classes 'thanks to the State' was foreseen by us and virulently denounced by us. The Leninist opposition did not succeed in deepening their aetiological examination of the phenomenon, and it is because of this that they did not come to revise the Leninist position in the face of the problems of the State and the Revolution.

## **The Abolition and Extinction of the State**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 3, October 24, 1936, page 4 and signed C.B. \*

French: Abolition et extinction de l'Etat

Whereas we anarchists desire the extinction of the state through the social revolution and the constitution of an autonomist federal order, the Leninists desire the destruction of the bourgeois state and moreover the conquest of the state by the 'proletariat.' The 'proletarian' state, they say, is a semi-state since the complete state is the bourgeois one destroyed by the social revolution. And even this semi-state would die, according to the Marxists, a natural death.

This theory of the extinction of the state which is the basis of Lenin's book 'State and Revolution' has been derived by him from Engels who in 'Anti-Duhring' says, "The proletariat seizes the power of the state and first of all transforms the means of production into the property of the state. But by achieving this it does away with itself as proletariat, it does away with all class differences and all class antagonisms and consequently also with the state as the state. Society as it was and as it is at present which is actuated by the antagonisms between the classes, needed the state, that is to say an organisation of the exploiting class with a view to maintaining the

outward conditions of production, more particularly with a view to maintaining by force the exploited class in the oppressive conditions demanded by the existing mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage labour). The state was the official representative of the entire society, its synthesis in visible form, but it was only this to the extent that it was the state of the class which itself represented in its time the entire society: the state of citizens who owned slaves in antiquity, the state of the feudal nobility in the Middle Ages, the state of the bourgeoisie in our time. But by becoming at last the true representative of the whole society, it renders itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer a social class to maintain in oppression; as soon as the clashes of interest and the excesses are abolished at the same time as class domination and the struggle for individual existence which is founded in the old anarchy of production from which they result, there is nothing more to repress, and a special force for repression, the state, ceases to be necessary. The first act by which the state confirms itself in reality as the representative of the entire society—taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time the last proper act of the state. The intervention of the power of the state in social relations becomes superfluous in one area after another, and eventually dies away of its own accord. Government of people is replaced by administration of things and control of the process of production. The state is not 'abolished'; it withers away. It is from this point of view that one must appraise the expression: 'a free popular state' as much for its short-lived interest for discussion as for its definitive scientific inadequacy; from this point of view also must the claims of those who are called anarchists and who desire that the state should be abolished overnight be appraised."

Between the State-Today and the Anarchy-Tomorrow there would be the semi-state. The state which dies is the 'state as the state' that is to say, the bourgeois state. It is in this sense that one must take the phrase which at first sight seems to contradict the proposition of the socialist state. "The first act by which the state confirms itself in reality as the representative of the entire society—taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time the last proper act of the state." Taken literally and out of context, this phrase would signify the temporal simultaneity of economic socialisation and the extinction of the state. In the same way also, taken literally and out of context, the phrases relating to the proletariat destroying itself as proletariat in the act of seizing the power of the state would indicate the lack of need for the 'Proletarian State.' In reality, Engels under the influence of 'didactic style' expresses himself in an unfortunate manner. Between the bourgeois state today and the socialist-anarchist tomorrow, Engels recognises a chain of successive eras during which the state and the proletariat remain. It is to throw some light on the dialectical obscurity that he adds the final allusion to the anarchists "who desire that the state should be abolished overnight" that is to say, who do not allow the transitory period as regards the state, whose intervention according to Engels becomes superfluous, "in one area after another" that is to say, gradually.

It seems to me that the Leninist position on the problem of the state coincides exactly with that taken by Marx and Engels when one interprets the spirit of the writings of these latter without letting oneself be deceived by the ambiguity of certain turns of phrase.

The state is, in Marxist-Leninist political thought, the temporary political instrument of socialisation, temporary in the very essence of the state, which is that of an organism for the domination of one class by another. The socialist state, by abolishing classes, commits suicide. Marx and Engels were metaphysicians who frequently came to schematise historical processes from love of system.

'The Proletariat' which seizes the state, bestowing on it the complete ownership of the means of production and destroying itself as proletariat and the state 'as the state' is a metaphysical fantasy, a political hypothesis of social abstractions.<sup>4</sup>

It is not the Russian proletariat that has seized the power of the state, but rather the Bolshevik Party which has not destroyed the proletariat at all and which has on the other hand created a State Capitalism, a new bourgeois class, a set of interests bound to the Bolshevik state which tend to preserve themselves by preserving the state.

The extinction of the state is further away than ever in the USSR where static interventionism is ever more immense and oppressive, and where classes are not disappearing.

The Leninist programme for 1917 included these points: the discontinuance of the police and the standing army, abolition of the professional bureaucracy, elections for all public positions and offices, revocability of all officials, equality of bureaucratic wages with workers' wages, the maximum of democracy, peaceful competition among the parties within the soviets, abolition of the death penalty. Not a single one of the points in this programme has been achieved.

We have the USSR a government, a dictatorial oligarchy. The Central Committee (19 members) dominates the Russian Communist Party which in turn dominates the USSR.

All those who are not 'loyal subjects' are charged with being counter-revolutionaries. The Bolshevik revolution has engendered a saturnal<sup>5</sup> government, which deports Riazano, founder of the Marx-Engels Institute, at the time when he is preparing the complete and original edition of 'Des Kapital,' which condemns to death Zinonev, president of the Communist International, Kamenev and many others among the best propagators of Leninism, which excludes from the party, then exiles, then expels from the USSR a 'duce' like Trotsky, which in short is dead set against 80% of the supporters of Leninism.

In 1920 Lenin was speaking very highly of self-criticism within the lap of the Communist Party and spoke of 'mistakes' recognised by the 'Party' and not of the right of the citizen to denounce these mistakes, or those things which seemed to him to be such of the party in government. When Lenin was dictator, whoever caused a stir in denouncing the same mistakes which Lenin himself recognised in retrospect risked or underwent ostracism, prison or death. Bolshevik Sovietism was an atrocious joke even for Lenin who vaunted the god-like power of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party over all the USSR in saying: "No important question be it one of political discipline or relating to organisation, is decided on by a state institution in our Republic without a directive emanating from the Central Committee of the Party."

Whoever says 'proletarian State' says 'State Capitalism' whoever says 'dictatorship of the Proletariat' says 'Dictatorship of the Communist Party;' whoever says 'strong government' says 'Tsarist oligarchy of politicians.'

Leninists, Trotskyists, Bordighists, Centrists are only divided by different tactical ideas. All Bolsheviks, to whatever stream or faction they belong are supporters of political dictatorship and State Socialism. All are united by the formula: 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' an ambiguous phrase which corresponds to 'The People Sovereign' of Jacobinism. Whatever Jacobinism is,

---

<sup>4</sup> Hypostasis: in theology this word is equivalent to 'nuance,' thus the father, son and holy ghost are three hypostases of a single divine substance Here the proletariat's act of seizing power is a hypostasis which contains several magic processes: destruction of the state and the proletariat.

<sup>5</sup> Saturnal: an allusion to the myth of Saturn who ate his own children. The Party devoured, Trotsky, then Stalin, then Krushchev etc.

it is certain to cause the Social Revolution to deviate. And when it deviates, 'the shadow of a Bonaparte' is cast across it.

One would have to be blind not to see that the Bonapartism of Stalin is merely the horrible and living shadow of Leninist Dictatorialism.

Camillo Berneri

- Citation from French translation in *Camillo Berneri: Guerre de Classes en Espagne et Textes libertaires* (Paris: Spartacus, 1977)

## What can we do?

*Guerra di Classe* No. 3, 24th October. 1936

French: *Que faire?*

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

If Fascism were victor, France would be threatened in the south and the balance of forces in the Mediterranean would be permanently upset in favour of Italy and Germany who would emerge from this adventure stronger and more aggressive. Italy is seriously committed in Ethiopia, and Germany is in a very bad financial situation; do they want a war 'immediately?' No. They could go to war but they do not deliberately want a war straight away. If they wanted it, they would already have set it in motion in Spain. We therefore have to adopt a forceful foreign policy, having as its basis Portugal which has eluded the control of Great Britain. Geneva is powerless. The only thing to do is therefore to break with Portugal by means of the following measures: the immediate expulsion of all Portuguese diplomatic representatives; immediate and complete closure of the border with Portugal; confiscation of all goods belonging to Portuguese capitalists resident in Spain.

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

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

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

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

3. Given our lack of arms and munitions, we must expand production on the spot by making use of foreign technicians, whose utilisation has been very badly organised; we must also rapidly create all the war industries possible and put an end to the wastage of munitions by giving far-reaching instructions and decisive orders.

4. We must achieve 'unity' just as much in the general and specific plan of the military operations which must be carried out on all fronts as in liaison among the commands of the areas by means of a General Staff controlled by a 'National Defence Committee.'

5. We must completely and without pity eliminate the Fascist remains which oblige us to maintain a front line within our ranks and have recourse to systematic searches, mass arrests of people who are not in unions who are of the right age and physical condition for military service, strict control of new recruits to the trade unions etc....

6. We must force Madrid to reconstitute immediately all the Spanish diplomatic corps which will have to be reformed with members chosen by the 'National Defence Committee.'

### **Dictatorship of the Proletariat and State Socialism**

*Guerra di Classe* No 4, 5th November, 1936

French: Dictature du prolétariat et socialisme d'Etat

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is a Marxist conception. According to Lenin "only he is a Marxist who extends his acknowledgement of the class struggle to an acknowledgement of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Lenin was right: the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is, in effect, for Marx no more than the conquest of the state by the proletariat which, organised in a politically dominant class, arrives, by way of State Socialism, at the elimination of all classes.

In the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' written by Marx in 1875 we read:

"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the State can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

In the *Communist Manifesto* he was already saying:

"The first step on the path to the workers' revolution is the elevation of the proletariat to the position of ruling class...The proletariat will gain from its political domination by little by little tearing away from the bourgeoisie all capital, by centralising all means of production in the hands of the State, that is to say in the hands of the proletariat itself organised as the ruling class."

Lenin, in 'State and Revolution,' only confirms the Marxist theory:

"The proletariat only needs the state for a certain length of time. It is not the elimination of the State as a final aim that separates us from the anarchists. But we assert to attain this end, it is essential to utilise temporarily against the exploiters the instruments, the means and the procedures of political power, in the same way as it is essential in order to eliminate the classes to instigate the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class"

"The State will disappear in so far as there are no more capitalists, there are no more classes and it is no longer necessary to oppress 'any class'. But the State is not completely dead as long as 'bourgeois rights' which sanctify de facto inequality survive. In order that the State dies completely, the advent of integral communism is necessary."

The Proletarian State is conceived of as a temporary political structure destined to destroy the classes. Gradual expropriation and the idea of State Capitalism are at the basis of this conception.

Lenin's economic program: of the eve of the October Revolution ends with this phrase: "Socialism is nothing more than a State Socialist Monopoly".

According to Lenin: "The distinction between the Marxists and the Anarchists consists of this:

1. The Marxists, although they propose the complete destruction of the State, believe that this can only be realised after the destruction of the classes by the Socialist Revolution, and as a result of the triumph of socialism which will come to an end with the destruction of the State; the Anarchists want the complete elimination of the State overnight without understanding what are the conditions which make it possible.

2. The Marxists proclaim the necessity for the proletariat of securing political power, of destroying entirely the old machinery of State and of replacing it by a new mechanism consisting of an organisation of armed workers of the type of the Commune; the Anarchists, in calling for the destruction of the machinery of State, do not really know 'with what' the proletariat will replace it nor 'what use' it will make of its revolutionary power; they even go as far as to condemn all use of political power by the revolutionary proletariat and reject the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

3. The Marxists want to prepare the proletariat for the Revolution by using the modern State; the Anarchists reject this method."

Lenin was disguising the facts. The Marxists "do not have the complete destruction of the State in mind", but they foresee the natural disappearance of the State as a consequence of the destruction of the classes by the means of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', that is to say State Socialism, whereas the Anarchists desire the destruction of the classes by means of a social revolution which eliminates, with the classes, the State. The Marxists, moreover, do not propose the armed conquest of the Commune by the whole proletariat, but they propose the conquest of the State by the party which imagines that it represents the proletariat. The Anarchists allow the use of direct power by the proletariat, but they understand the organ of this power to be formed by the entire corpus of systems of communist administration—corporate organisations, communal institutions, both regional and national—freely constituted outside and in opposition to all political monopoly by parties and endeavouring to reduce to a minimum administrative centralisation. Lenin, in the interests of polemic, arbitrarily simplified the facts about the difference between the Marxists and us.

The Leninist phrase: "The Marxists want to prepare the proletariat for the Revolution by using the modern State" is the basis of Leninist Jacobinism just as it is the basis of Parliamentary Government and Social Reformist Ministerialism.

At the International Socialist Congresses of London (1896) and Paris (1900) it was established that only parties and workers' organisations which recognised the principle of the "Socialist conquest of the public authorities by the proletarian faction organised in a party as a class" could belong to the Socialist International. The split came about at this point, but in effect the exclusion of the Anarchists from the International was only a triumph of Ministerialism, opportunism, and 'Parliamentary Cretinism'.

The anti-parliamentary trade unionists and several communist factions quoting Marxism as authority rejected the pre-revolutionary or revolutionary Socialist conquest of the public authorities.

Whosoever looks back on the history of Socialism after the exclusion of the Anarchists can see for themselves the gradual degeneration of Marxism as a political philosophy through the interpretations and practices of the Social-Democrats.



Leninism constitutes, without any doubt, a return to the revolutionary spirit of Marxism, but it also constitutes a return to the fallacies and abstractions of Marxist metaphysics.

### **Beware, Dangerous Corner!**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 4, 5th November, 1936

French: Attention, tournant dangeureux

1. I shall not say like some people: I cannot be silent! No, I want to talk. I have a duty to do it and I have a right to do it in the name of the self-criticism which is the essence of any party or movement concerned to retain its own appearance and to accomplish its own historic mission. Persuaded that the Spanish Revolution is rapidly approaching a dangerous corner, I seized my pen as I would seize a rifle or a revolver. With the same determination, but also with the same ferocity. Please allow me a style suited to the atmosphere of war in which I live: the style of a hail of machine gun fire.

2. The military situation has not improved. These are the principal reasons: lack or scarcity of arms and ammunition, absence of a united command, general inadequacy of the leaders, the capitulating attitude on the part of the central government, dualism and antagonism between Madrid and Barcelona. It appears clearly that we must change from a war of positions to a war of movement, unleashing the offensive according to a broad and solid general plan. Henceforth time is against us. We must definitely accelerate the process of war in order to pass beyond the phase of the war into the fuller and more profound one of the Social Revolution.

3. We must master the war, but we shall not master the war by limiting the problem to the strictly military conditions of victory. We must above all take account of the 'socio-political' conditions of victory.

The Civil War in Spain being an international conflict, it is on international ground that we must pose the problem of revolutionary action in terms of war, it is at its weak points: Morocco and Portugal that we must cruelly wound Spanish Fascism. Up till now the obsessing preoccupation with equipment for war has not permitted us to implement a plan of action which carried out in a timely and skilful manner would have been able to frustrate the Fascist Putsch. The Anarchists who assume the roles of generals would do well to remember their own experiences as revolutionaries.

4. When the CNT in Madrid declares that 'el gobierno de Madrid no sabe dirigir la guerra' (the government in Madrid does not know how to run the war), this inevitably poses the problem not only of the intervention of the CNT in the running of the war but also of the conditions and form of such an intervention. It is not a matter of superhuman reforms, but simply of a broad, profound and rapid reform of the controlling groups and the organs and means of liaison among the various columns. The militarisation of the militias is not a solution of a technical nature only, and it is a political fault to have accepted it peacefully without clarifying its purposes, without illustrating its obscure points and without having discussed its principal outlines. The 'column spirit' and the confusion between the power of political control and the power of military command can justify in part the decree of the Generalitat of Catalonia, but such a decree does not help at all towards the solution of the vital problems of the military victory of the revolution.

5. It is not possible to find a solution to the problem of the needs of the war until after we have resolved the question of Spanish politics.

Fabregas, councillor for economics of Catalonia could declare, "We sent to Madrid a commission to ask the Government for credit of 300 million pesetas and also for the purchase of equipment for the war and 150 million francs for the purchase of raw materials. We offered as security 1000 million pesetas in government bonds belonging to our savings banks and deposited with the Bank of Spain. All that has been, refused us." (*Solidaridad Obrera*, 29th September).

Madrid is not content just to reign, it wants to govern as well. As a whole the Spanish Government is just as hostile to the Social Revolution as to Monarchist and clerical fascism. Madrid desires a 'return to legality' and nothing else. Arming Catalonia, financing Catalonia, that signifies to Madrid arming the columns which carry the revolution on the points of their bayonets and supplying the new egalitarian economic order.

We must therefore, addressing ourselves to the Government in Madrid, give it the choice between defeat in the war and the revolution and victory.

6. Given that it is clear that the Government in Madrid is developing a 'policy of war' capable of ensuring its political hegemony and blocking the development of the Social Revolution; that the Communist Party (following directives laid down by Moscow) is tending to become the Foreign Legion of Democracy and Spanish Liberalism and that Spanish Social democracy at the very least, its controlling ranks is revolutionary...in the manner of Caballero; it is therefore necessary that our press (without even raising the threat of war, of a 'march on Madrid' without even unleashing a polemic against the Communists and the Socialists, without even threatening the stability of the alliance between the CNT and the UGT) is at the very least cured of its intoxication with the unfortunate spins of 'holy union' which has ended up by reducing political criticism to an imperceptible minimum. '*Solidaridad Obrera*' by exalting the Bolshevik government of the USSR, albeit in parentheses, achieved the summit of political naiveté.

7. The purging of the internal front is henceforth restrained by the normalisation, in terms of the police and the judiciary, of the struggle against Fascism. The fact that some elements of the CNT and FAI have gone into police organisations is not sufficiently compensated by an autonomy which would have allowed speed and discretion in their duties and missions. And we must add to that certain absurd arrangements and certain red-tapisms that should have been abolished by the representatives of the CNT and the FAI continue to exist and are having disastrous effects.

8. The work of selecting military, health and administrative personnel is very incompetent. This selection could have been carried out by being based on the possibility of replacing immediately and equally, incompetent and unsafe elements by foreign elements faithful to the cause of the Spanish Revolution, or at least tested anti-fascists. This has not been tried.

In the same way the CNT does not make sufficient use of experts who could at present replace incompetent and suspect experts and tomorrow constitute the guiding cadres of libertarian communism

9. Some time ago the CNT and the FAI adopted, with respect to the 'normalisation' of the Spanish Revolution, an attitude of self-denial. '*L'Espagne Antifasciste*' has denounced this phenomenon with great courage and keenness, I shall therefore not dwell on it. In short: the suppression of the Central Committee of the militias as well as the power of the workers' and soldiers' committees constitutes an outrage against the trade union control of the militias. I think that it is not without reason that '*Le Temps*' heaves a sigh of relief while stating that the 'social revolution in Catalonia is becoming more and more egalitarian.'

10. The Council of Economy is basically nothing other than the 'Economic Council' instituted by the French Government. It does not seem to me to be a sufficient compensation for the Min-

isterialism of the CNT and the FAI, even in its practical applications. It is necessary to deplore, moreover, the advance of bolshevisation within the ranks of the CNT characterised by the ever diminishing possibility for elements at the power base to exercise a vigilant, active and direct control over the works accomplished by the organisation's representatives within government committees and Councils. We should create a series of commissions elected by the CNT and the FAI which have the aim of facilitating, but at the same time of rectifying whenever necessary the works of our representatives within the Councils of War and Economy.

This would be necessary in the same way in order to create points of contact between the personal work of these representatives and the necessities and possibilities of CNT and FAI initiatives.

11. I have tried to reconcile 'current' considerations, inherent in the necessities of the historic moment, with the direction of the 'trend' which does not seem to me to deviate from these necessities. I am not proposing any 'correct direction' to pilots navigating between surface shoals and powerful currents. Policy has its own necessities and the moment imposes on the Spanish Anarchists the necessity of a 'policy.' But we must be up to the mark of the historic role which it has been deemed useful to assume. But it is also necessary not to believe that there are profound breaks of continuity in the directions of current trends.

To reconcile the 'necessities' of the war, the 'will' of the revolution and the 'aspirations' of Anarchism: there lies the problem. This problem must be resolved. On it depend the military victory against Fascism, the creation of a new economy, the social deliverance of Spain and the evaluation of the Anarchists' beliefs and actions. Three great things which merit every sacrifice and impose on each the duty to have the courage to state his own beliefs in their entirety.

## **Madrid, sublime city**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 5, 2nd December, 1936

French: Madrid ville sublime

Pilate is just as infamous as Judas. Who is Pilate today? He is not even the assembly of Geneva foxes, he is not even the ostriches of Social-democrat Ministerialism. Pilate is you, the European proletariat!

Can you, oh tender proletarian mother tuck your little child into its bed without seeing mangled children lying abandoned in the roads like carrion. Can you play lovingly with your child, oh proletarian, without thinking of the children lying in pain in hospitals, suffering the tortures of their wounded flesh and the anguishes of fear.

And yet you read left-wing papers and you know that there exists a great city running with blood, torn apart and reduced to ashes by explosions of shells; they tell that the children have been surprised by death when they were shouting to the heavens the songs of their unconcern, that their mothers roam about searching for the fruit of their wombs and carry their blood-stained bodies in search of unlikely or belated help. The stench of death rises from dispatches and correspondence from Madrid. The sky over Madrid is red with fires which should set the world aflame. And yet, everything collapses, everything burns, a whole population is dying—without the masses being affected.

In the agony of Madrid there is all the horror of a rape in the market-place on market day.

Death can continue to strike, sudden as hail in summer and unavoidable as lightning. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse had for themselves the calm of high altitudes and the moral void

of the époque. Let them shake it, let them rend it apart, let them burn it slowly, this martyred city; millions of proletarians don't care at all about it. Is Madrid resisting? Many wonder how long it can hold out. It is a European bullfight. It is a disgrace to the peoples and not merely to the governments and the classes. It is the blockade of anti-fascist indifference that adds itself to the criminal Fascist siege. Meetings will not stop the aircraft from flying through the sky over Madrid and scattering death and ruin. The cold sweat that weighs on the brows of mothers, the eyes of children enlarged by fear, the bodies pounded and shaken by the convulsions, are no more than a future vision of what you will suffer, you who are entrenched in non-intervention! Today, the war is in the sky over Madrid, tomorrow it will be in the sky over it Barcelona, the day after tomorrow in the sky over Paris. The European war has started again. It exists, even if it has not been declared. These are the aircraft and pilots of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany which are massacring and ruining Madrid.

The horror of it no longer touches people's consciences? Well then, the bombs will waken them. And that will be Historic justice.

Madrid, the joyous Vienna of the Iberian Peninsular is reviving the deeds of Sagonte. It has passed from the lovers' waltz to the Heroic Symphony. Epic witness of the acts of heroism of the masses and the militias, beside which those of the Commune of Paris pale in comparison; it is disappointing the warlike hopes of the generals it will expose their careful calculations, it will give the lie to their boastfulness. It is resisting and will resist. If the compassion of the masses is deaf, if Europe is incapable of anger, well then, the whole world will be branded by the energy of this city. Madrid will not be taken. It can be completely destroyed, but it will not be taken alive. Death, exodus and the flames will make of it a new Pompeii to the very end.

If it is not the wings of victory, it will be those of Nemesis that are unfolded above it. The reputation of the Fascist generals is assured, but it will be the reputation of Genghis Khan. It will be another Commune. but it will not be a final glimmer; it will be the blazing up of a fire that will bring all the 'spectators' out of their lairs, at least as long as it does not burn them there in their Blumist beds.

Madrid where here thousands of men are fighting with an ardour nourished and sustained by the presence of thousands of women and children is in the process of pillorying its hangmen and the blind and deaf masses. It is in the process of lighting for all a light which will once more permit of hope in man.

Madrid, the martyr city, already merits the title of sublime.

## **Between the war and the Revolution**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 6, 16th December 1936

French: *Entre la guerre et la révolution*

There are many among us who have arrived at the point of describing the armed intervention of powers which have economic and military interests opposed to those of Italy and Germany.

If these two nations enter the lists with all the forces that they have at their disposal, it is clear that only the intervention of Russia, France and Great Britain reunited could assure Spanish anti-fascism of victory in the war. But it is also clear that before the armed intervention of these powers could crush the fascist forces, enough time could have elapsed to allow the fascists to crush the revolutionary forces.

The English and French capitalist states have an interest in preventing the victory of the Spanish fascists coming to the point at which it is exploited by Italy and Germany, but they have no interest in seeing the Iberian revolution triumph. In the situation in which Italy and Germany were to intervene in Spain with the immediate intention of attacking France (a surprise attack in the western Mediterranean), it would be possible that Great Britain and Russia would intervene immediately. But if such were not the case, it would be possible for the Spanish Revolution to be crushed before the intervention could take place.

We cannot place any hope, as do certain naive and numerous hypocrites, in the paralytic of Lake Geneva. Madrid is being tortured by Fiats, Capronis and Junkers piloted by Italian and German aviators; The Balearics are subject to the terrorising dictatorship of a close-cropped Italian fascist, and thousands of German and Italian mercenaries are landing in Spain with arms and baggage. The Italo-German armed intervention could not be more obvious, more active, more engrossing. The appeals sent to the League of Nations by the Spanish Government found an assembly of spontaneously deaf men ludicrously occupied in tangling up procedural chicaneries.

We cannot hope for more France. In the same way as Eden placed in the scales of international justice the independence of Ethiopia and world war, Blum has placed there the liberty of the Spanish people and world war. 'War: that is the ransom. We do not accept it!'

No one hates war more than us, but we believe that the moment has come when the truth of the phrase once stated by Leon Blum will be proved: "We must accept the possibility of war to save peace."

The policy of non-intervention has not stopped Bolivia attacking Uruguay to dispute its right to the Chaco, it has not stopped Japan annexing Manchuria, it has not stopped Italy's fierce conquest of Ethiopia. Pacifism follows a road paved, like that to Hell, with good intentions, but this road leads into the abyss.

The peace of Geneva is heavy with massacres and ruins. The peace of Geneva: it is an arms race, the crushing of the militarily most feeble peoples, it is the Italian Duce and the German Fuhrer, ever more powerful and always helping in the creation of new Fascist states.

The International Trade Union Federation and the Socialist International continue to associate themselves with this tactic of non-intervention supported by the French and English governments, and during this time, the Fascist intervention has penetrated to the very heart of Spain. The mass of working people must choose: either their intervention or the triumph of Fascism. And they do not move. It is in vain that they repeat: "Spain is the scene of a struggle which, by its consequences, goes beyond the frontiers of the country, because it is in Spain that Fascism is playing its last card."

We must not overestimate the imperialist designs of the Italo-German intervention and envisage them exclusively in relation to future developments in their Mediterranean expansion. Spain is for Mussolini and Hitler an immediate conquest, a current problem. Overcoming the Spanish revolution is equivalent for Italian and German fascism to the conquest of Spain. Fascism victorious in Spain means the revolution broken and the way open to imperialist conquests. This will therefore mean war, the enslaving of the European proletariat, a 'new Middle Ages.'

The French and English proletariat will do nothing to help the Spanish proletariat. It is useless for us to delude ourselves. It would be dishonest to do it to ourselves.

And so it is the Spanish revolution that is in danger, whatever may be the outcome of the Civil War.

A surprise armed intervention on the part of Britain, Russia and France is not likely, but such an intervention would not be at all impossible at the moment when Spain is on the point of dying. This would be the intervention of the lions against the hyenas. It would perhaps be the intervention that would snatch Spain from Italo-German imperialism, but it would be to stifle the fire of the Spanish Revolution.

Already today, Spain is between two fires Burgos and Moscow.

The strength of the Spanish Anarcho-syndicalist movement must not dazzle us. On the day when the army corps of France Britain and Russia intervene after an exhausting struggle between the revolutionary forces and the Hispano-Italo-German Fascist coalition, on that day the Social Revolution will be halted and the way opened to the bourgeois revolution.

Once Fascism has been crushed it is possible that the Anarcho-syndicalist FAI and CNT will continue to fight to achieve their social programme. But in that case the Socialist communist bloc will oppose them.

It is *Le Populaire* of 27th November, 1936 which gives us this view.

The Republicans, the Socialist leaders and the Communists are already agreed on a 'constitutionalist' platform. The Executive Committee of the Spanish Communist Party recently declared that in the current struggle it intends to defend democracy and safeguard private property. There is a smell of Noske in the air. If Madrid were not in flames, one would be obliged to recall Kronstadt again. But the policy of Madrid is on the point of triumphing. It has refused arms or money to revolutionary Catalonia in order to place itself in the hands of the USSR which has provided arms and the officers who are destined to control the anti-fascist struggle and to halt the development of the Social Revolution in the armed struggle against Fascism.

The dilemma 'Madrid or Franco' has paralysed Spanish Anarchism. Today Barcelona is situated between Burgos, Rome, Berlin, Madrid and Moscow. Besieged.

Black clouds are building up on the horizon and we are blinded by fogs.

Let us set our lights and hold the tiller with a hand of steel. We are on the high seas and the tempest is raging. But we can still perform miracles. Caught between the Prussians and Versailles, the commune lit a fire which still lights the world.

Between Burgos and Madrid there is Barcelona.

Let the Godets of Moscow think on that

## **The Third Stage**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 7, 18th January, 1937 \*

French: Troisième étape

The Civil War in Spain has entered into its third phase. The first was that of the 'Fascist military putsch' curbed by the revolutionary forces with the CNT and the FAI at their head, and by the resistance of the proletarian masses of Barcelona. The second is that of the 'Civil War;' on one side are part of the army and the police forces led by factious [fascist?] officers, on the other side are the workers' and peasants' militias guided by loyalist officers and controlled by the different advanced or progressive parties. It is a civil war with a guerrilla aspect, the social developments of which are clothed in a revolutionary and collectivist character, especially in Catalonia, Aragon and the Levant areas which come under the influence of the CNT and the FAI. We are still in this second phase on which a third 'international' phase is however coming to superimpose itself, due

to the overt intervention of Italo-German Fascism on the one side, and on the other of Russian Bolshevism.

Henceforth the development of the internal situation is subject in the main to foreign factors. These are the Hitlerians and the anti-fascist émigrés of Germany and Austria, the Italian Fascists and anti-fascists, the Bolshevik Russians and the White Russians, the French Communists and the Irish Catholics—who are at grips with one another on the Madrid front. The relationships between the forces are in the process of changing, militarily and politically. The Civil War is in the process of taking on a faster rhythm, an even broader field of action, a more decided character, whilst the Russian intervention assures the hegemony of the Socialist-Communist forces which up to now were completely dominated by the Anarchist forces.

I have said and I repeat: the Civil War can be won in the military arena, but the triumph of the political and social revolution is threatened. The problems of the future in Spain are henceforth indissolubly linked to the international developments of the Civil War.

The fact that the French and British governments are transforming their legations in Addis Ababa into consulates leads one to expect that they will recognise the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. Will Mussolini separate from Germany, abandoning the Fascist intervention in the affairs of Spain? I do not think so. For that it would be necessary for the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office to take the decision to say firmly, Enough! But, to the contrary, what do we see?

The Blum Cabinet, obsessed by fear of war, puts up with anything: it allows them to shoot the French journalist Aguillard, to kill Deiapree, the Paris-Soir correspondent who was flying to Madrid in a plane belonging to the French embassy and it even permits them to shell an Air France plane on French territory. Let the Fascist forces threaten to cut the line between Cerbere and Port Bou. Let them threaten to scuttle the French vessels like they scuttled the Russian steamer 'Komsosnol' let them busy themselves with unleashing the Moroccan uprising: all this will not make the Blum Government decide to remonstrate with the brigands of Burgos.

The Italian government is recruiting 'volunteers' for Franco and setting them down in their thousands in Portugal and Spanish Morocco. An Italian Fascist brigade has already revealed itself on the Madrid front at the outposts in the Carabanchel Sector. And Hitler continues to send thousands of volunteers to swell Franco's ranks.

The military victory of Fascism in Spain would correspond to the Italo-German encirclement of France. The 'Ami du Peuple' comments thus on the report in the 'News Chronicle' of the sending of at least five German divisions to Spain:

"From the rate at which the German landings in the peninsula are going, it is no longer just along the Rhine that we must be on our guard, but also on the Pyrennes. Let the Fuhrer develop his schemes and France risks being surrounded, or at the least having two German frontiers. Such is the stern truth. It manifestly transcends doctrinal preferences for one or the other of the Iberian factions."

It is evident that at present a reactionary opinion in favour of neutrality in the war in Spain is emerging strongly in France. It is a change of direction which could favour immensely a firm policy in favour of anti fascist Spain on the part of the Blum Cabinet.

Many French people justify their government's policy as regards the Spanish Civil War by saying: Britain is not behind us. We have reached it is true a 'gentleman's agreement' between Italy and Britain. Mussolini accepted the conditions which he had refused a few months earlier in order to renew commercial relations with Britain, he signed the protocol on submarine warfare, Italy confirmed once again that he has no intention of invading the Balearics. The Mediterranean:

that is what preoccupies the British Empire. Mussolini, having in his speech of 1st November last claimed the right to Italian expansion in the Mediterranean, had alerted Britain as much as Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey.

Mussolini, after having calmed the Foreign Office on the Mediterranean question, continues his flirtation with Wilhelmstrasse, while the Quai d'Orsay perseveres in its role as the easy going cuckold. And Hitler, persuaded that France will not move, is in the process of preparing (according to 'l'Oeuvre') to strike against Czechoslovakia.

In brief, while Mussolini, Hitler and Eden are playing for high stakes, the Blum Cabinet is lighting candles and reciting Novenaes without any plan of action, without any show of bravery and without the least dignity.

Unconcerned and neutral in the face of the sacrifice of Irun, apathetic and prudent at the martyrdom of Madrid, Blum waits and hopes. He is full of confidence and he polishes the feathers of his white dove, while deluding himself and others.

Irun, Heusca and Saragossa would have been the tombs of Fascism if we had prevented Brenn and Caesar from throwing their own swords unto the Fascist side of the balance of the Spanish Civil War. Now the stake is Madrid: even if it costs massacres and ruins.

The time which has elapsed between the neutrality of sabotage and help in dribs and drabs has allowed a guerrilla campaign (which would rapidly have dried up or ended in the victory of the proletarian militias) to be transformed into a civil war which has all the horrors of a major war and which is a danger to the equilibrium in Europe.

At the time when a determined surgeon was necessary, Blum has been no more than a timid homeopath.

If the division of 'blond Moors' and Black Shirts come to reinforce Franco's ranks, all Spain will be transformed into a theatre of desperate struggles. One cannot limit such a conflagration. And those who did not wish to and did not know how to extinguish the fire when it started will bear the burden of a tremendous responsibility.

The crucified city of Madrid is already denouncing its Pontius Pilate. Leon Blum? Not just him but thousands, millions of men. Even you, French proletariat! A man, whatever he may be, does not bar the road to the masses when they are marching towards liberty and justice.

To save Dreyfus, your boulevards, Paris, have been in uproar. So they were to save Ferrer. They were again to save Sacco and Vanzetti.

Now they are not crying out in anger, they are not any longer the arteries of France's heart, they are no longer the beds of those powerful torrents of protest which washed away so many disgraces to save man's dignity. Madrid is crucified. Madrid is to be burnt at the stake. What is Paris doing?

Paris applauds La Passionaria, Paris cries, "Aircraft for Spain," Paris sends ambulances, supplies and volunteers.

That is not enough, Paris is not giving its richest, most powerful most European possession: its anger, its loud voice of protest.

If Paris is enraged, the whole world is silent and turns to listen. The "great transmitter of all just campaigns it cannot send out its powerful SOS for revolutionary Spain.

Paris, yell out your pity for the martyred, sublime city of Madrid, your protests against the Spanish proletariat's executioners, your hate for the enemies of the Rights of Man and the Citizen which you have affirmed with three great revolutions.



Let your powerful voice condemn Burgos, Rome and Berlin; let it strengthen Madrid and the other martyred cities; let it encourage the generous fighters of the anti-fascist militias who are defending the rights of the producers and the dignity of the citizens; let it fill the procrastinating ministers with shame; let it be finally your great generous voice, the voice of your greatest days, the voice that comes from the very depths of your heart.

This voice has thundered so many times with the love that must take up the axe and it is that, the deepest love!

- Citation from French translation in *Camillo Berneri: Guerre de Classes en Espagne et Textes libertaires* (Paris: Spartacus, 1977)

## **The Wisdom of a Proverb**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 8, 1st February, 1937

French: La sagesse d'un proverbe

The Swiss Federal Council was the first to inaugurate, in the name of 'neutrality,' a regime of persecution against the friends of Free Spain, desiring by this servile and reactionary attitude to pay homage to the ogres of Berlin and Rome.

An outcry of scandal then arose from the synagogues of Social-Democracy. And Stalin's admirers protested vehemently.

Soon after, the Belgian government, which is composed of Social Democratic ministers, expelled Canon Gallegos and Father Lobo, Catholic priests guilty merely of having declared at private meetings their solidarity with the legal government of Spain.

Then there was the British government dragging out from the dust of centuries a law of 1870 which punishes the enrolment of British citizens in foreign militias.

The United States in their turn brought up for discussion a law of 1811 forbidding North American citizens enrolling abroad.

Finally, the French government obtained from the Chamber of Deputies full powers to surround Republican Spain with a 'cordon sanitaire' against the influx of foreign volunteers. And these powers, it received them from the Communist and Socialist groups in parliament. There is nothing surprising in the attitude of the Socialists. It coincides with that of 'Populaire' and only serves to confirm it. But the attitude of the Communists constitutes a scandalous change of policy. The English Communists had protested at the blockade of volunteers. Ted Barnales, head of the London section of the English Communist Party had declared in one of his speeches on 11th November last:

"For or each German soldier in Spain, we will send a seasoned English fighter. This is our reply to the decision taken by the government to prevent volunteers departing for Spain."

And l'Humanité, at the news that the French government intended to forbid the enrolment of volunteers, burst out in repeated protests. A platonic gesture on the part of the French Social Democrat and Stalinist leaders, bound up to the very end with the wet-blanket government and the human ostrich.

The Petit Parisien of 15th December announced a 'strengthening of control' on the part of France, and Gabriel Peri wrote in l'Humanité:

"Petit Parisien is the unofficial monitor of the Quai d'Orsay. We would like to know whether the plan which it is announcing has, as the Petit Petit Parisien indicates, the approval of M. Delbos.

We would like to know if it has the approval of the President of the Council. If not we would like to read a denial as soon as possible.”

Instead of a prompt denial, the Populaire of 8th January wrote:

”We believe that there would be no difficulty in adopting the advice of the German government which is proposing, in its reply, to remove from Spain, all foreigners taking part in the fighting including the political agitators and propagandists. with the aim of re-establishing the state of affairs existing in August 1936.”

And it concluded:

”We must not lose any time in useless investigation of their intentions by trying to discover the ’traps’ which there may be in the replies of Berlin and Rome. There is a certain way of overcoming all difficulties. It is by applying and making all others apply a policy of non-intervention in Spain; by eliminating from Spain all combatants who are not Spanish. We must do it at and do it quickly.”

With Peri, Cachin, Vaillant–Couturier and company protested. But Moscow took the helm. And who would associate themselves directly in the name of the Communist group in parliament with the Blumist ’faction?’ Peri was the very man, he who had maintained with the greatest obstinacy and vehemence that France should have a policy overtly in favour of the Spanish Republic. The buffoons and idiots of Bolshevism are as bad as the buffoons and idiots of Social Democracy. The Socialist parliamentary group trampled on the last resolution of the executive committees of the IOS and the FSI which declares that,

”the maintenance of peace, which is the supreme asset of the workers of ail countries and, consequently, the primary concern of governments under Socialist control or with Socialist participation, can only be assured on the condition that Democracy opposes an attitude bent on blackmail or fascist menaces.”

The Communist parliamentary group, for its part, completely denied an infinite number of explicit declarations against French ’neutrality’ declarations made at its meetings and published in its papers, mainly in ’Humanite.’

Non-intervention plays into the hands of Hitler and Mussolini, and thus of Franco. The English Memorandum and the French moratorium proposing to the German and Italian governments that they stop sending volunteers to Spain go back to 3rd December 1936. The Italo–German reply came on 7th January. Thirty-five days of...meditation, thirty-five days of massive dispatch of men and military equipment to Franco.

The Italian government recruited ’volunteers’ by means of orders sent through the military districts; it directed towards Spain by means of force, men recruited to work in Ethiopia, it concentrated volunteers for Spain in the barracks. it even used common law convicts to swell the ranks of the volunteers: it created concentrations of expeditionary forces in la Spezia, Eboli, Salerno and Cagliari: and it transported them in the State ships as far as Spanish Morocco.

After the bombings carried out over Spanish territory by Italian planes, using for their base the airfield of Elmas after the occupation of Majorca, we have all the elements of proof to show that Italy has intervened militarily in the Spanish Civil War. Mussolini has no intention of renouncing Spain. ’Roma Fascista’ does not hesitate to declare. ”We are fighting and we shall win in Spain.” ’Il Giornale d’Italia’ implies that French control of access routes to Spain on land will be virtual. Hitler and Mussolini are demanding the impossible of the English and French governments: like, for example, suppressing propaganda in favour of Spain and removing from Spain all foreign anti-fascists.

The bad faith of Mussolini and Hitler appears with as much clarity as the over careful stupidity of Blum. Mussolini, in contempt for all international law, has sent at least 20,000 men to Spain, and there are besides (according to 'Ami du Peuple') at least 30,000 German soldiers in Spain. The Italian government and the German government will continue to send men, arms and ammunition whatever promises they make.

The Anglo-French "neutrality" has been, is and will always be a hypocritical intervention in favour of Spanish, German and Italian Fascism.

To accept the supervisory blockade, is the same as putting on the same place the loyal government and an army of rebels, it is the same as putting Europe in the dilemma: war or the triumph of fascism. And the triumph of fascism is the inevitable war of the very near future.

The Blumist policy has never had a clear and coherent line of action because it is dominated by fear and a tendency to compromise. It is a Social Democratic policy.

The French Communist Party, by adhering to this policy, has erased one of the few fine pages in its history, The international repercussions will have profound consequences. As will the repercussions on French internal politics. But the most important thing for us is, for the moment, to examine the needs of our struggle in Spain in relation to the new situation. We will deal with that elsewhere. Today we are experiencing an agonising and troubling emotion as we see the wisdom of the popular proverb being confirmed: "May God guard me from my friends. I can take care of my enemies." (i.e. With friends like these, who needs enemies?—Translator's note).

Spain, surrounded by declared enemies and false friends will not continue on its own path any less because of them. We wish with all our filial love for this magnificent people that this path will lead to the shining heights of triumph. But even if it leads us to the deepest abyss of defeat, we would always have the consolation of having wanted to be with the innocent victims and not with the murderers of unarmed people; of having defended the sacred cause of liberty and justice and not the return to tyranny and feudal privilege; of having taken part in the melee, choosing our side decisively, and having rejected the degrading share of cowardly and stupid compromises.

## **Problems of the Revolution: the City and the Country**

*Tierra y Libertad*, February 1937, translated from *Volontá*, 1st December 1950

French: La Ville et la Campagne (problèmes de la révolution)

Emile Pouget wrote in 1906 (*Almanac of the Revolution*), "There are no possible or effective revolutions except when workers and peasants participate in the movement. If on the contrary only one of these categories is on the move whether it is the peasants or the workers the movement will miscarry."

More than in any other circumstance, this necessity of the union of the peasant and the worker has been emphasised by syndicalist propaganda. Up to now, the development of the Spanish Social Revolution has shown a remarkable synchronism between collectivist action in the towns and the country, and the opposition which existed in the Russian and Hungarian Revolutions have not presented themselves. That does not mean to say however that they will not appear tomorrow, and the Spanish comrades must of necessity continue, as up to now, their effort to maintain an intelligent balance between the city and the country.

The first antagonism that looms up between the city and the country during the revolution comes from the urgency of the problem of providing provisions. Spain has had a great advantage

for itself: namely a certain autonomy in relation to foreign countries. However Spain is beginning to run into difficulties in resolving the problem of provisioning the towns. And this problem could become more and more difficult.

Two tendencies appear in the midst of the masses of working people in the towns: firstly forced requisitioning, then a more pacific and rational solution.

Forced requisitioning is a great mistake. All history of revolutions shows this. The French revolutionary government of 1793 tried to use the 'strong' method, and the results were disastrous: 11th April 1794 the Committee of Public Safety ordered the requisition of one pig in eight. The owner was to work on it until it had attained the maximum weight. A great show of circulars and measures to inspect, pay, conserve, centralise etc. was made. Several months later when the commissar presented himself to take the animal, he only found a skeleton or a pig more dead than alive.

The Russian Revolution offers a more recent example of the disastrous effects of a policy of forced requisition. It fully confirms Kropotkin's predictions in '*The Conquest of Bread*': "When the Revolution breaks out, the Russian peasants will keep their bread for themselves and their families." The Bolsheviks themselves recognised the error of forced requisition at the Provincial Congress of the Soviets which took place in Moscow in 1919. The results of the expeditions of provisioning parties were disastrous: disorder, plots, peasant revolts (Lunivsk, Paulovsk, Mokoovsk, Bielieh, Ponikolsk etc), violent suppression, bad economic results. The frightened peasants sowed less. The livestock similarly diminished greatly. Rich areas, Tambov, suffered scarcity.

The policy of requisition completely checked the revolutionary momentum of the countryside. Emma Goldman recounts an anecdote which clearly illustrates the miserable condition of the peasants: A group of peasants presented themselves before Lenin one day to discuss their lot.

"May God protect you," said the oldest of the peasants.

"Are you not happy, my friend? You have lands, cows, chickens, what more do you want?" replied Lenin.

"Praise be to God, we have land, but you take all the corn; chickens, but you take away the eggs, cows, but our children have no milk. That, my friend, is why we are asking you to help us."

The abandonment of requisition, which was again demanded by the Kronstadt sailors on 1st March 1921, was not announced until the 12th by Lenin at the opening of the Tenth Communist Party Congress when Trotsky was putting down Kronstadt.

It is left to us to examine the acquisition of agricultural products. In this too, the French Revolution offers significant examples of the danger of using money refused by the peasants and excessively low prices.

If in 1793 the countryside caused famine in the large cities, this was not due to a fall in cereal production, but because the peasants refused promissory notes without any security in gold. It would be wrong to believe that only the rich peasants refused to sell their products, the small farmers were equally opposed to exchanging the fruit of their sweat for these promissory notes, on while Kropotkin comments as follows in *The Great Revolution*:

"As long as they offer the peasants a worthless scrap of paper, the situation did not develop. The foodstuffs remained in the countryside, even if they had recourse to the guillotine."

The policy of imposed prices had no better effects: the foodstuffs became scarce. The Assembly lowered retail prices by decree (29th September 1793), anticipating that wholesale prices would follow. Wholesale dealing stopped, and commerce also.

The Russian Revolution offers other examples. Seeing that violence did not produce results, the Bolshevik government began to buy agricultural products, but it made a new mistake. The price was too low. As in the case of corn the price of which was slightly higher than before the Revolution when the prices of industrial products had increased by thirty to forty times.

+++

We have seen that neither forced requisition nor promissory notes have given good results. There only remains the exchange of manufactured goods for agricultural products.

Kropotkin, in *The Conquest of Bread*, presented this solution as bring very effective, although a contributor to Malatesta's magazine (Carlo Molasehi in '*Pensiero e Volonta*' Rome 1st January 1925) considers it to be an 'unknown quantity'. In this connection, I wrote in Fabbri's '*Lotte Umana*' (Paris, March 1928): "When Kropotkin was writing, he was thinking of the torch that was going to replace the paraffin light, of the spade that would replace the plough etc." Today the peasant's need for agricultural machines is relative, and in certain areas and for certain forms of cultivation they are unusable. He possesses many articles of convenience and no longer needs everything. Few peasants would exchange their corn for a vegetable cleaner. Before the needs of the peasants increase and industry abandons the production of luxury articles a certain time will pass. "Consequently, the peasants will be paid in money, cash of a recognised weight and value."

Luigi Fabbri added a note in which he observed,

"If the mentality of the peasant is so backward that he demands money, it will be a good idea to examine how this demand can be satisfied. It is a hypothesis which for good reasons wounds the anarchists who must do all they can, by propaganda and by researching other means, to avoid such a choice. However, it is advisable to bear it in mind that, from an anarchist, revolutionary, humane and also practical point of view, this choice is preferable to the system of coercion and of authoritarian requisition."

As one can see, Fabbri was excluding requisition and was not rejecting money, but he was not tackling the problem. In my article 'The anarchists and agrarian smallholding' (La Revista Blanca, 15th November 1932), after declaring myself in favour of the use of money in trading between the towns and the countryside, I wrote,

"Naturally a system for the exchange of goods, of work, of means of transport is always possible as an integral part of the system of buying and selling." If the local councils or the trade unions, or both at the same time, were the intermediary organisations between the rural smallholders and the farming co-operatives and between the latter and the industrial workers, they would be able to facilitate this exchange without money.

For example, a local council that has organised the production of bread wants to be provided with corn. It applies to the peasants, offering them in exchange for their corn work provided by the building co-operative, to which the local council will give the necessary materials. One could find infinite examples.

At the time I had omitted a fundamental aspect of the problem: agreement between the prices of the factories and the peasants' ability and desire to buy. The exchange of commodities between the city and the country is an ideal form which is not always attainable. It is one of the weak points of Socialist economics. In the Russian Revolution this was one of the principal factors in the transition from the SEP (Socialist Economic Policy) to the NEP (New Political Economy).

Coordination between the urban and agrarian economies is much more difficult than is generally supposed among Socialists. The Catalan peasants refusal of the proposals for exchange put to them by the Barcelona Wood Syndicate is a typical example of this. The peasants generally

have need of seeds, chemical fertilisers, agricultural machinery and only later do economic improvement and spiritual development give them the need for conveniences, aesthetic and luxury items.

The urban society must therefore respond to these possibilities and to the peasants' preferences if one wants to avoid antagonisms looming up between the towns and the countryside. As in the USSR where agricultural and industrial prices are so widely different that they constitute and perpetuate divergent interests, the central point of all the variations in Bolshevik economic policy, and which explains almost all aspects of internal political struggles.

To recap, I should say that anarchists in towns should refuse to take part in expeditions for forceful requisition and even prevent them, demanding that the problem of provisioning the towns and the militias be resolved by a common agreement between the peasants and the workers on the purchase of agricultural products, whether with a stable currency or by exchange and credit certificates.

As for the anarchists who live in the country, they must at one and the same time, repel requisition and fight all attempts at buying up and sabotage, and carry out an intense campaign of persuasion on the subject of the towns' problems, like provisioning, in order to facilitate agreement between the workers in the country and the workers and technicians in the towns, in order to encourage federation between the urban and rural co-operatives, in order to promote and support all spontaneous experience which would tend to reduce the money supply. Harmony between the towns and the countryside is only possible by avoiding the USSR's mistakes: forced requisition, destruction of consumer cooperativism, centralisation of distribution, increase of factory prices, transition from suppression to tolerance of speculators, monetary inflation etc.

I am not a prophet. I have therefore been able to air some points of view that are completely superficial, as much to the present as for the future. However, I consider that it is not useless to suggest plans for relations between the towns and the countryside, given that this problem draws our attention and demands deep and meticulous study and elaboration. I leave that task to those who are more competent, for I am no economist.

### **Open letter to comrade Federica Montseny**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 12, 14th April 1937

French: Lettre ouverte a la comarade Federica Montseny

Dear Comrade,

It was my intention to address myself to all you comrade ministers, but once the pen was in my hand, I addressed myself spontaneously to you alone and I did not wish to go against this instinctive impulse.

The fact that I am not always in agreement with you neither astonishes you nor irritates you, and you have shown yourself cordially oblivious to criticisms which it would almost always have been fair, because it is human, to consider as unjust and excessive. This is not a minor quality in my eyes, and it bears witness to the anarchist nature of our mind. It is a certainty that effectively compensates, as far as my natural friendship is concerned for the ideological peculiarities which you have often revealed in your articles in your very personal style and in your speeches of admirable eloquence.

I could not sit back and accept the identity that you claimed between Bakunist anarchism and the federalist Republicanism of Pi y Margall. I cannot pardon you for having written "that

in Russia it was not Lenin the true builder of Russia, but Stalin in fact, the effective spirit, etc.” And I applauded Voline’s reply in ‘Terre Libre’ to your entirely false claims about the Russian anarchist movement.

But it is not about that that I wish to talk with you. On these matters, and indeed on others, I hope one day or another to talk to you personally. If I address you in public, it is about matters that are infinitely more serious, to remind you of the enormous responsibilities, of which you are perhaps not aware because of your modesty

In your speech of 3rd January, you said,

”The anarchists have come into the Government in order to prevent the Revolution from deviating from its course and in order to pursue it beyond the war, and also in order to oppose all possibility of dictatorial endeavours, wherever they should come from.”

Well then, comrade, in April, after three months of collaborationist experience, we find ourselves face to face with a situation in the course of which serious actions are taking place, while other, worse ones are taking shape.

Where, as in the Basque country, in the Levant and in Castille, our movement is not imposed by grass-roots strength, in other words by vast ranks of unionists and by the preponderant adherence of the masses, the counter-revolution is oppressing people and threatens to crush everything. The Government is at Valencia and it is from there that assault guards are setting out, destined to disarm the revolutionary cells formed for defence. One calls to mind Casas-Viejas while thinking of Vilanesa<sup>6</sup>. It is the civil guards and the assault guards who are retaining their arms; it is they too who in the rear must control the ‘uncontrollable,’ in other words disarm the revolutionary cells equipped with a few rifles and a few revolvers. This happens while the internal front has not been liquidated. This happens during the course of a civil war in which every surprise is possible and in regions where the front is very close and extremely jagged is not mathematically certain. This, while a political distribution of arms appears clearly, tending to arm only in strict necessity (strict necessity, which we hope will appear adequate) the Aragon Front, the armed guard of agrarian collectivisation in Aragon and buttress of Catalonia, that Iberian Ukraine. You are in a government that has offered France and Britain advantages in Morocco, whereas, since July 1936, it would have been necessary to proclaim officially the political autonomy of Morocco. I can imagine what you, anarchist, must think of this affair which is as disgraceful as it is stupid; but I believe that the time has come to make it known that you and the other anarchist ministers are not in agreement as regards the nature and the purport of such propositions.

On 24th October 1936, I wrote in *Guerra di Classe*:

”The operational base of the Fascist army is Morocco. We must intensify our propaganda in favour of Moroccan autonomy throughout the pan-Islamic area of influence. We must dictate to Madrid unambiguous declarations announcing the abandonment of Morocco and the protection of Moroccan autonomy. France would anxiously envisage the possibility of insurrectionary repercussions in North Africa and Syria; Great Britain would see the movements for self-rule in Egypt and among Arabs in Palestine growing stronger. We must exploit such anxieties by means of a policy which threatens to unleash revolt throughout the Arab world.

”For such a policy we need money and we need urgently to send agitators and organisers as emissaries to all the centres of Arab migration, into all the frontier zones of French Morocco. On

---

<sup>6</sup> Vilanesa, small Spanish village where many CNT militants were massacred after their union premises had been looted.

the fronts in Aragon, the Centre, the Asturias and Andalusia a few Moroccans would be enough to fulfil the role of propagandists (through the radio, tracts, etc.)”

It follows that one cannot simultaneously guarantee British and French interests in Morocco and carry on with insurrectionary work. Valencia is continuing the policies of Madrid. This must change. And to change it, one must state all one’s own thoughts clearly and strongly, because in Valencia there are influences acting which tends towards treating with Franco.

Jean Zyromski wrote in ‘Populaire’ of 3rd March: “The manoeuvres are visible and they are aiming at the conclusion of a peace which, in reality, would signify not only the halting of the Spanish Revolution, but also the annulment of the social conquests already achieved.

”Neither Caballero nor Franco, such would be the formula which would express briefly a conception which exists, and I am not sure that it does not have the favour of certain political, diplomatic and even governmental circles in Britain and also in France.”

These influences, these manoeuvres explain different obscure points: for example the inactivity of the loyalist fleet. The concentration of troops coming from Morocco, the acts of piracy against ‘Canaries’ and ‘Balearics,’ the capture of Malaga are the consequences of this inactivity. And the war is not finished! If Prieto is incapable and indolent, why tolerate him? If Prieto is bound-by a policy that makes him paralyse the fleet, why not denounce this policy?

You anarchist ministers, you make eloquent speeches and you write brilliant articles, but it is not with speeches and articles that one wins the war and defends the Revolution. The former can be won and the latter can be defended by allowing us to pass from the defensive to the offensive. The strategy of holding our position cannot last for ever. The problem cannot be resolved by throwing out orders: general mobilisation, arms to the Front, sole command, popular army etc. etc. The problem can be resolved by achieving immediately what can be achieved.

The Toulouse *Dispatch* of 17th January wrote,

”The main preoccupation of the Minister of the Interior is with re-establishing the authority of the State over that of the groups and over that of the uncontrollable whatever their origin.”

It follows that when for months they try to annihilate the ‘uncontrollables’, they cannot resolve the problem of the liquidation of the ‘Fifth Column’<sup>7</sup>. The suppression of the internal front has as its primary condition activity aimed at investigation and repression which can only be accomplished by tried and tested revolutionaries. An internal policy of collaboration between the classes and of flattery towards the middle classes leads inevitably to tolerance towards politically ambiguous elements. The Fifth Column is composed not only of elements belonging to Fascist bodies, but also of all the malcontents who desire a moderate republic. Now, it is these latter elements who profit from the tolerance of the hunters of the ‘uncontrollables’.

The liquidation of the internal front was a condition of full and radical activity by the Defence Committees set up by the CNT and the UGT.

We are assisting in the infiltration into the controlling ranks of the popular army of ambiguous elements without offering guarantees of political and union organisation. The committees and political delegates of the militias were exercising a beneficial control, which, today, is weakened by the predominance of strictly military systems of advancement and promotion. We must strengthen these committees and these delegates.

---

<sup>7</sup> Fifth Column, name given in Spanish press to the grouping of Fascist organisations existing behind the Republican Front.’



We are assisting the new situation which could have disastrous consequences, a situation in which whole battalions are commanded by officers who do not enjoy the esteem and affection of the soldiers. This situation is grave because the value of the Spanish militia-men is directly proportional to the confidence enjoyed by their own commander. It is therefore necessary to re-establish the system of direct election and the right of dismissal by those below.

A grave error has been committed by accepting authoritarian formulae, not because they are such from the point of view of their form; but because they contain tremendous errors and political aims that have nothing to do with the necessities of the war.

I had the chance to talk to senior Italian French and Belgian officers and I ascertained that they give a clear indication of knowing the real necessities of discipline, a much more modern and rational conception than certain neo-generals who claim to be realists.

I believe that the hour has come to form the confederal army, in the same way as the Socialist Party has set up its own company: the 5th regiment of the popular militias. I believe that the hour has come to resolve the problem of sole command by effectively achieving unity of command which allows us to move onto the offensive on the Aragon Front. I believe that the hour has come to finish with the thousands of civil guards and assault guards who do not go to the Front because their job is to control the 'uncontrollables.' I believe that the hour has come to create a war industry in earnest. And I believe that the hour has come to finish with certain flagrant extravagances: like those of respect for Sunday as a day of rest and of certain 'rights for the workers' sabotaging the defence of the Revolution.

We must, above all, keep up the morale of the combatants. Louis Bertoni, interpreting the sentiments expressed by various Italian comrades fighting on the Huesca Front, wrote not so long ago:

"The war in Spain, thus stripped of all new faith, of all ideas of social change, of all revolutionary greatness, of all universal meaning, is no more than a common war of national independence, which must be earned out to avoid the extermination which the world plutocracy has in mind. There remains the terrible question of life or death, but it is no longer a war to assure a new regime and a new humanity. People will say that all is not yet lost; but in reality, everything is threatened and beleaguered; our side use the language of renunciation, the same as was used by Italian Socialism at the advance of Fascism: Beware of provocation! Calm and serenity! Order and discipline! All the things that in practice boil down to doing nothing. And as in Italy Fascism finished up by triumphing, in Spain, anti-socialism in republican garb cannot but win, unless anything that we have not foreseen should come to pass. It is useless to add that we are simply setting it down, without condemning those on our side; we could not say how the behaviour of these people could be different and efficacious, as long as the Italo-German pressure grows at the Front and that of the Bolshevik bourgeois grows in our rear."

I do not have Louis Bertoni's modesty. I have the pretension to assert that the Spanish anarchists could have a political line different from the prevailing one; I claim to be able by capitalising on what I know of experiences in various great revolutions of recent years and on what I read in the Spanish libertarian press itself, to advise certain lines of conduct.

I believe that you must pose yourself the problem of knowing if you are better defending the Revolution, if you are making a greater contribution to the struggle against Fascism by participating in the government, or if you would not be infinitely more useful carrying the flame of your magnificent skill with words among the combatants and to the rear.

The time has also come to clarify the significance for unification that our participation in the Government could have. We must speak to the masses, appeal to them to judge whether Marcel Cachin is right when he states in l'Humanité of 23rd March:

"The responsible anarchists are multiplying their efforts towards unification, and their appeals are ever more sensible."

...Or whether *Pravda* and *Izvestia* are right when they slander the Spanish anarchists calling them saboteurs of unity. To appeal to the masses to judge the moral complicity and policy of silence of the Spanish anarchist press as regards the dictatorial offences of Stalin, the persecution of Russian anarchists, the monstrous case against the Leninist and Trotskyist opposition, a silence deservedly rewarded by *Izvestia's* libelling of *Solidaridad Obrera*.

To appeal to the masses to judge whether certain acts of sabotage of provisioning do not fall within the plan announced on 17th December 1936 by *Pravda*:

"As for Catalonia, the purging of Trotskyist and anarcho-syndicalist elements has begun; this work will be carried out with the same energy with which it was done in the USSR."<sup>8</sup>

The time has come to find out whether the anarchists are in the Government to be the vestal virgins tending a fire that is on the point of going out, or even if they are there from now on to serve as a 'Phrygian cap'<sup>9</sup> for politicians flirting with the enemy or with the forces for the restoration of the 'Republic of all classes.' The problem is set by the clear evidence of a crisis which is outstripping the men who are the personages who embody it.

The dilemma: war or revolution no longer has any meaning. The only dilemma is this one: either victory over Franco thanks to the revolutionary war, or defeat.

The problem for you and the other comrades is to choose between the Versailles of Thiers and the Paris of the Commune, before Thiers and Bismarck form the holy alliance. It is up to you to reply, for you are the "light under the bushel."

## War and Revolution

*Guerra di Classe* No. 13, 21st April 1936

French: Guerre et révolution

The Spanish Republic was born in April 1931 out of a political revolution that was almost peaceable. A Spanish Socialist leader recognised that this revolution 'no habia removido las entranas del pais.' The mass of the people were deceived by the Republic which was not given any social consolidation since it did not give land to the peasants. The agrarian reform voted for by the Cortes dragged on from scheme to scheme and was applied in homeopathic doses.

In October 1934, an Andalusian peasant represented several million of his fellows when he said to Bertrand de Jouvenel, "The Socialists promised us land. We are told that the application of agrarian reform is a very complicated business. And we are still working for three pesetas a day."

The Republic had equally deceived the mass of the people in the towns. When Ernest Toller asked a Catalan worker what he thought of the Republic, he received the following very significant response, "It's just the old dog with a new collar."

A Republic that showed itself determined to improve social conditions would have been politically strong enough not to fear a Fascist insurrection. The Republic did not protect capitalist

---

<sup>8</sup> The translation is incorrect, but the sense is similar; see Mintz 'Self-management in Revolutionary Spain.'

<sup>9</sup> Phrygian cap, emblem of liberty [SCB].

interests solidly enough; no more did it encourage the emancipation of the proletariat; it has historically been the accomplice of Fascism in its obstinacy in searching for a compromise by means of governmental groupings instead of consolidating its position by means of firm, Socialist policies.

When the Fascist insurrection broke out, the Republic had succeeded in politically polarising all the progressive trade union organisations and parties solely because it appeared free of obvious reactionary infiltration, as the only line of defence behind which the attack on conservative forces could be sustained. It was the State that was accepted more than the Government. It appeared to be an indispensable organ of liaison between the various organisations of defence and the new administrative bodies, and also as a regulating and unifying centre for the diverse left-wing political forces.

Beneath this apparent union, a deep split persisted. On the one hand there were the 'loyalists', simply Republicans and more or less progressive. Close to them were the Social Democrats for whom the struggle between Fascism and the Social Revolution could be reduced to a war between Fascism and anti-fascism. On the other hand one could find the anarchists and the cream of the proletariat, both convinced that the instruction, 'to win the war' only had any real meaning as an indication of an immediate aim. Achieving this aim was a vital absolute necessity for all the left-wing parties and for all the trade union organisations; it was also the condition for the political and social progress of the whole nation. But that did not mean that the Social Revolution had to be limited to a war 'between Madrid and Burgos', to a war 'between the Republic of Azana and the government of Franco.'

The 'war' is in Spain a 'civil war,' that is a political and social armed struggle. And it is this all the more from the fact that it is not a matter there of straightforward factions fighting among themselves and having few contacts with the life of the masses. This event has none of the characteristics of a fight in hermetic isolation. A struggle between the supporters of Franco and the supporters of Azana could have presented enough analogies in which the social conquests of Catalonia, Aragon and the Levant have been started; with this struggle in which the winners will transform the whole life of the nation following a pre-determined political and social direction; with this struggle which could not end in a retreat of troops, but only in the exodus of the conquered.

The nature and extent of the conflict, its modes of development, the inevitable conditions of its resolution are such that the features of this armed struggle are those of 'war,' but that its essence is that of the 'Social Revolution.'

The proletariat is engaged in a struggle with the bourgeoisie while the high clergy and the military class are waging war on it, 'money provides the sinews of war' as the French say.

The economic burden of the war can no longer be born by the bourgeoisie; a new 'war economy' must therefore be stressed. An indispensable condition of a powerful 'industry of war' is a 'war economy' which to exist as an economy must have as its aim and as its essential *raison d'être* widespread usefulness.

Financial and monetary problems, like all other economic problems, can not be solved 'in economic terms' without damaging the interests of certain social classes. However, we must not, under the pretext of the necessity of winning the war, fall to the opposite extreme from the conservatives, into Socialist extremism which would not take its inspiration from the necessities of the armed struggle but from the formulae and programmes whose achievement is very far off.

The most fruitful position is the 'centrist' position. I am going to depend, in order to avoid all ambiguity, on a clear example. I think that the socialisation of large and medium scale industry is a 'necessity of the war' and an indispensable creation of 'the economy of war.' Certain anti-fascists are as much persuaded of this as I am, but they are not as a matter of principle collectivists. By supporting the 'current necessity' of the socialisation of large and medium-scale industry, I shall have on my side these anti fascists who will consent to it and will eventually come to assist.

I have, on the other hand, many reservations about the socialisation of small scale industry with regard to the 'necessities of the war' and I am obliged to enter into dispute with comrades who would want to extend industrial socialisation to its maximum.

I call my position 'centrist.' On my right I have those who are opposed to socialisation, on my left those who favour it absolutely and who have maximalist tendencies; in the centre I find myself in the company of all the collectivists who think like me and of plain anti-fascists, who retaining the belief that the creation of a firm war economy is indispensable, think that one of the principal factors of this economy is the socialisation of large and medium-scale industry. The centrist position does not take account solely of the strictly economic and current reasons which militate in favour of tolerance as regards the petty bourgeoisie, but it also takes account of psychological reasons.

The Russian petty bourgeoisie fought on the side of the proletariat from 1917 to 1920; during the insurrection of March and April 1920 in the Ruhr, the petty bourgeoisie took part in the struggle against Kapp and against the black Reichswehr; in October 1934 in Madrid and in Catalonia the petty bourgeoisie again took an active part in the insurrection, and it was the same in the Asturian insurrection. Today while we are fighting against Fascism, we must remember that if the peasants who were deceived by the failed agrarian reform participated only weakly in the Spanish Socialist insurrection of October 1934, it was the armed intervention of the Rabassaires (vine-growers' association) which in July 1936 was one of the principal factors in the defeat of Fascism in Catalonia.

Between the conservative declarations of Caballero and certain doctrinally maximalist criticisms of the opportunism of the CNT and the FAI, I believe that we must in a fair and timely fashion give a place to a straight forwardly rational solution to the problems of the 'war economy.'

Such a restatement will certainly not suffice to set up bridges between us and the POUM on the one hand and the controlling groups of the PSUC on the other. But it will be able to facilitate a sincere and active understanding among all true anti-fascists, and secondly will allow a more intimate collaboration among all those who are sincerely Socialists.

- Citation from French translation in *Camillo Berneri: Guerre de Classes en Espagne et Textes libertaires* (Paris: Spartacus, 1977)

+++

## **Counter Revolution on the March**

*Guerra di Classe* No. 15, 5th May 1937

French: La contre-révolution en marche

In the course of September 1930, Azana who was a member, with Zamora and Leroux, of the Provisional Government of the Republic, said at a meeting in Madrid, "We are going to conquer liberty by calling on all anti-monarchist forces, no matter what name they call themselves, no

matter where they are.” Such was the phrasing of the first ‘holy alliance:’ this alliance adopted as its political common denominator Republicanism. In August 1931 the Republic believed itself to be strong enough to precipitate the separation of the proletarian masses which were diverging from the government; the deportations of anarchists and syndicalists to the prisoner ships of Guinea were ordered by decree. 20th October 1931 the Cortes, including the Socialist deputies, voted in the Bill ‘for the defence of the Republic’ which was put into operation by repression of the anarcho-syndicalist movements. From 1932 onwards the pronunciamiento of Seville showed that Republican Fascism is a greater danger than the monarchist restoration, but Azana, speaking in the Cortes of General Sanjurjo’s attempted uprising, proclaimed that the Spanish Republic was not sick and “that it has purged itself of the scattered remnants of the old regime which it still contained.” In January 1933, Azana ordered the massacre of the insurgents at Casas-Viejas which was approved on 2nd February by 150 Socialist Deputies. In February 1936, in an interview in ‘Paris-Sou’, Azana stated that Lerroux and Gil Robles were liquidated; he declared, “We desire above all that order should prevail...State it clearly, we do not want to make a revolution...I want to govern legally. No dangerous innovations...We want social peace, we desire order, we are moderates.’

After the Fascist insurrection had broken out, the Socialist and Communist parties returned to Azana’s phrase of September 1930: defence of the democratic, parliamentary Republic. They still persist in this position, opening up a route to counter-revolution.

Louis Pierard, Deputy in the Belgian Workers’ Party, recently recognised in ‘Regards’ that “Socialism was practically non-existent in Catalonia before the 19th July.” The UGT which had at that time 9,000 members in Catalonia, now has 50,000. Such a rapid expansion is significant. The UGT is drawing the middle class to it. The fish-merchants of Barcelona have joined this organisation en masse to avoid the ‘collectivisation of fish’ which figures in the CNT’s programme. What happened in Barcelona has occurred equally in all of Catalonia, in Aragon and in the Levant. The enemies of collectivisation of the land, of industry and of commerce have joined the UGT and the PSUC en masse. ‘Trebball’, the mouthpiece of the PSUC, fights collectivisation and socialisation, while the CNT and POUM defend it. Henceforth, the union between the opportunist possibilism of the leaders of the PSUC and the bourgeois and petty bourgeois who have entered the Popular Front is evident. Already, in the course of the insurrection in Asturias, we have witnessed the rapid pseudo-revolutionary mimicry of the middle classes. When the Committee of Mieres called on employees, miners, foremen etc...., we witnessed the following phenomenon, described in the ‘Diary of a Miner’ published by Giustizia e Liberta:

”Scarcely had they read the proclamation, than the right-wing elements rushed to put themselves under our command; they went so far as to argue among themselves, each one wanting to be first. Suspicious excess of zeal. They are the first to salute by raising their fist and to praise the Revolution when they greet workers. In exchange they receive rations of food, tobacco and other products, sometimes superior to those of the revolutionaries themselves. The proletarians are careless and generous like children.”

In contrast, the bourgeoisie display cleverness and hypocrisy, “above all when their life is at risk.” After 19th July in Catalonia, in Aragon and in the Levant this same phenomenon could be witnessed, but in this case to a far greater extent.

When the Spanish Communist Party published in August 1936 a manifesto signed by Jesus Hernandez, declaring that they were fighting solely for a democratic Republic, when the same party confirmed the same line of action on 15th December of the same year, this was not so

must the external plutocracy of the 'democratic governments' which this organisation wished to reassure, but in fact the thousands of pseudo-neophytes who had infiltrated its ranks and those of the UGT. Even the United Youth Movement (JSU) disavowed Socialism; thus their Secretary General, Santiago Carrillo, was able to declare to the national congress of the JSU, which was held in Valencia on 15th January 1937, "We are not fighting for a Social Revolution. Our organisation is neither Socialist, not Communist... The JSU is not Marxist youth." 'Ahora,' mouthpiece of the JSU supported this thesis, rejecting the class-based lines of policy.

The counter-revolutionary declarations which Juan Casanovas, President of the Catalan Parliament, made in the '*Depeche de Toulouse*' last March, coincide with those of Comorera, a militant in the view of the PSUC, made last December. The elements of the Generalidad who, in October 1934, supported the autonomist-fascist putsch led by the triumvirate of Badia-Dencas-Mendez have not disappeared. More proof is furnished by the counter-revolutionary statements of Nicolau d'Olwer. 'Accion Catalana', the right of the PSUC, Galarza and his associates: there are the forces of the counter-revolution.

The Spanish Revolution finds itself caught between Burgos and Bilbao (where the Catholics, the Marxists and the Republicans establish their 'holy alliance' more and more by suspending the 'CNT del Norte' and imprisoning the Regional committee of the CNT). It is locked between Burgos and Valencia, where 218 adherents of the FAI and the Anarchist Youth (FIJL) are imprisoned and where the anarchist journal 'Nosotros' is persecuted. It is wedged between Burgos and Almeria where old man Moron held in prison one of the most heroic anti-fascist fighters: Francisco Maroto.

The shadow of Noske looms up. Monarchist-Catholic-traditionalist Fascism is only one sector of the counter-revolution. We must remember that. It must be said, We must not be a party to the manoeuvres of this great 'Fifth Column' whose tenacious vitality and redoubtable mimicry have been showed by six years of Spanish Republic.

The Spanish Civil War is developing on two politico-social fronts. The Revolution must triumph on two fronts. And it will overcome.

## **Interview in Spain and the World**

Translation from *L'Espagne Nouvelle*, February 1937

The first question we asked Camillo Berneri concerns the military situation as he saw it.

"I have no special skill in military technique", he replied, "but I can inform you of the impressions I received on the Huesca Front which I know well because I have fulfilled in turn the roles of ordinary Militia man, of political delegate of the 'Italian section' of the Ascaso Column and now of delegate to the Defence Council. I have the impression that the militia has made great advances. At the start, one was aware of a great lack of experience in the struggle against modern engines of war: for example time was wasted in shooting at aircraft flying at high altitudes, automatic weapons were neglected in favour of those which comrades were used to handling; the problem of roads was abandoned; ammunition was in short supply; liaison between different arms and units was defective and sometimes absolutely zero.

"At the present moment the militia-men have profited from the lessons of the last six months, transport has begun to be rationalised, roads are being repaired, equipment is more abundant

and better distributed, and into the 'mind of the column' is slipping this idea; the necessity of co-ordinating command.

"We are forming divisions, and this will complete the economic plan of war, and the best known representatives of the CNT and the FAI have made themselves its supporters. In fact, it was these two organisations which were the first to propose a united command in order to be able to exert a decisive pressure on the weak points of the enemy lines, to relieve the pressure which the enemy is exerting on besieged towns and to prevent unfavourable manoeuvres and concentrations"

So, we observed, there is some good in militarisation"

"Certainly," Berneri replied with conviction, "but there is a distinction to be made: there is on the one side military formalism which is not only ridiculous, but also useless and dangerous, and on the other side there is self-discipline. The latter can be extremely strict, as is the case in the Durruti Column. Military formalism can be met, for example, in certain columns controlled by the Workers Party for Marxist Unification (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, POUM). When one asserts, as is written in the code of duty of the Uribarri Column, that "the soldier who knows how to salute properly also knows how to fight", one is guilty of stupidity reminiscent of Frederick II or Peter the Great.

"For my part I support a legitimate compromise: we must neither lapse into military formalism not into superstitious anti-militarism. By accepting and achieving the reforms imposed on us by the nature of things, we shall by the self-same means, be in a position to resist the manoeuvres of Madrid and Moscow, which are trying to establish, under the pretext of militarisation, their military hegemony over the Spanish Revolution, in order to transform it into the instrument of their political hegemony.

"As for myself, I consider it a mistake to talk, as do certain representatives of the CNT-FAI of an overall or 'supreme' command instead of a unity of command. (That is to say co-ordination in matters of the control of the armed struggle). Their intentions are good, but the terms used leads to dangerous confusion's!

"All things considered, therefore, the reforms needed in the militia, in my opinion, would be the following: a clear distinction between military command and political control, in the domain of the preparation and execution of the operations of war; strict fulfilment of orders received, but maintenance of certain fundamental rights: that of nominating and degrading officers."

At this point the following question came to our lips: "What do you think of the internal political situations as regards the position taken by the CNT and FAI?"

"The necessity of Holy Alliance of all anti-fascist forces has led the Spanish anarchists to consider as 'comrades' many of their enemies of yesterday and to accept from their hands a part of the governmental responsibilities. It is not easy to draw up an exact balance sheet of the profit's and losses deriving from this experience, but I think that today we have sufficient information for appraisal to be alarmed at the Russo-Bolshevik infiltration into military and technical spheres, adding itself to the dictatorial designs of the Marxist parties. On this last point, one can see a certain weakening of the CNT, and the situation is dangerous. But I hope that we shall overcome it victoriously, because among the Spanish anarchists, there is no lack of men who see clearly and understand the necessity of returning as soon as possible to the right path."

And collectivisation is it progressing?

"It is progressing to a certain extent, as you could realise yourselves. One must be ignorant and of bad faith to talk, as certain dissident Communists are doing, of a 'deadpoint' in the so-

cial revolution in Spain or to represent the Spanish anarchists as 'conservatives' (exactly when collectivisation is spreading and strengthening itself in regions, like the Levant and Catalonia, where the anarchists have the greatest influence),

"If there is a conservative faction on the left, it is composed without doubt, of the right-wingers of Spanish Social-Democracy and of the orthodox organisations of Russian Bolshevism. For us the struggle is on between Fascism and Libertarian Communism. For the 'moderates,' it is simply a matter of the defence of democracy. But although the political horizons are distinct and opposed, the plan of battle reunites all the factions on the left. The main thing is to know whether the 'comrades' who are opposed to the social revolution will go so far in limiting it as to betray the promise they have given."

Comrade Berneri was on the point of leaving us, and we hastened to put a last question: "What do you think of the behaviour of the Popular Front Government in France as regards Rome and Berlin's policy of intervention"

"It is as cowardly as it is stupid. The Fascists have bombed Port-Bou, an international station and the French government has stopped sending trains in that direction! Another bombing of an Air France plane and no French machine will cross the border of the Pyrenees! Now France is busy preventing anti-fascists from coming to fight in Spain, while the governments of Hitler and Mussolini continue to send men, arms, planes and ammunition to the Fascist forces. A reasonable policy of support for the Spanish government would have allowed the anti-fascist militias to sort out the military mutiny in a few days. But the French government persists in believing neutrality is possible while it constitutes encouragement to the triple alliance of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. Only broad-based and decisive popular action in France and Britain can force the respective governments of these countries to, adopt a less absurd behaviour."

## **The Death of Berneri by Frank Mintz**

French: Les derniers jours

In a letter to his wife, he wrote on 25th April 1937, "I who am not generally afraid in the face of danger, I am sometimes seized by a fear of death, without there being any particularly objective reason."

During the night of the 3rd and 4th May he wrote to his daughter Mane-Louise:

"What evil the Communists are doing here too! It is almost 2 o'clock and I am going to bed. The house is on its guard tonight. I offered to stay awake to let the others go to sleep, and everyone laughed, saying that I would not even hear the cannon! But afterwards, one by one, they fell asleep, and I am watchful over all of them, while working for those who are to come. It is the only completely beautiful thing. More absolute than love and truer than reality itself: What would humanity be without this sense of duty, without this emotion of feeling bound to those who were, who are distant, ignored, lost? Sometimes I think that this Messianic sense is no more than escapism, is no more than the search for and construction of an equilibrium, a stability which otherwise would precipitate us into disorder or despair. Whatever it is, it is certain that the most intense sentiments are the most human.

"One can lose one's illusions about everything and about everyone, but not about what one affirms with one's moral conscience. If it was possible for life to save Bilbao with my life, I should not hesitate for one instant. (...)



"All that I have said above has a slightly ridiculous solemnity for anyone who does not live here. But perhaps one day, if I can talk to you of these months, you will understand."

## **1937-1977: Four Decades without a History by Frank Mintz**

translated by Simon Bennett

French: 1936-1977: Variations communistes sur les journées sanglantes de Barcelone

The Parisian publisher Spartacus published several months after these events the booklet by Marcel Ollivier 'The Bloody Days of Barcelona–The GPU in Spain' (republished in 1976 with others, under the title of 'Spain–The Grave-diggers of the Social Revolution').

To what extent do historical research and the publication of various eye-witness accounts correct or emphasize Ollivier's inquiries and interpretations?

It is remarkable that the majority of historians recognise year after year that the question needs to be studied thoroughly: Orwell in 1938 in 'Homage to Catalonia' (which is an eye witness account and a basic study); Burnett Bolloten in 'The Grand Camouflage'; Cesar Lorenzo in 'Les Anarchistes espagnols et le pouvoir'; and one might wonder if there is anything to change since then, as in 1974 Carlos Semprun Maura in 'Revolution et counter-revolution en Catalogne' makes extensive use of Ollivier's evidence.

To Ollivier's question: 'Was there in fact an instruction issued?' which he half answered, we can now answer no. And that for both antagonists.

H. Thomas rightly explains that if the Communists and their Catalan Nationalist and Republican bourgeois allies had wanted to attack and wipe out anarchism and heterodox Marxism, they would have ousted their divisions, as they did in Aragon in August 1937 in order to suppress autonomy and workers' control.

On the other side, if the anarchists and the POUM had wanted to exterminate the Communists in Barcelona and Catalonia, they would as a preliminary measure, have ousted their divisions; and, above all, a systematic series of incidents would have occurred in their fiefs (that is to say all the industrial cities and most of the villages). Now, in Lerida where the POUM were particularly strong, in Hospitalet de Llobregat, Cornellà, Badalona, Mataro, the suburb of Barcelona with FAI groups well-known for their activism, nothing happened.

Moreover, in spite of the propaganda about arms held back in reserve, the workers of Barcelona, the CNT and the POUM were short of arms and ammunition (see Orwell). As for the munitions factories controlled by the CNT-FAI, the artillery at Montjuich operated by the anarchists, the CNT-FAI refused to use them, and only made use of them to exert pressure during negotiations (Abad de Santillan, 'Por que perdimos la guerra,' 1940). Only five armoured cars–the term is more accurate than tank–were used to...protect the HQ of the CNT-FAI (not to defend the telephone exchange!) as Souchy save in 'The tragic week in May', 1937.

The Communists refuse these interpretations totally, and if the term: anarchist and Trotskyist 'putsch' has been used automatically from 1960 (Maidanik, 'Ispanski proletariat v natsionalnoe revoliutsonnoe voine') to 1977 (Vidiella, in 'Historia 16') there is also a development. When a grave responsibility is invariably attributed to Franco's agents according to the evidence of Von Faupel, Nazi ambassador to Franco (message of 13th May 1937, the disturbances in Barcelona had been provoked by his agents, in German political archives); now Carrillo in 'Demain l'Espagne,' 1974, and, above all, Viviella in April 1977 talk of 'the internal contradictions in the Soviet rev-

olutionary processes...transposed onto the international plan,' and –on the assassination of the POUM leader Andres Nin–it was an 'assassination. But I would claim that neither the Spanish Communist Party nor the PSUC–Catalan Communist Party–had anything to do with it.' A phrase from Vidiella that is all the more surprising than that he claims on the same page that Soviet agents did not intervene 'at all.'

Ollivier's chronological description is still accurate, but one is aware of lacunae for the 5th May with the absence of any mention of the assassinations of Berneri and Barbieri and the Communist Sese. In contrast, the refusal of the CNT leaders of the assistance of the anarchist divisions and the POUM sections is perfectly true. On this point, which is so often stressed by the Communists and their bourgeois allies, it must be added that the day after the troubles, the 4th May the Catalan Government used the alpine militias (a fact that is pointed out by Manuel Cruells his famous but incomplete book, *Mayo Sangriento*, 1969) who had been summoned in haste (see 'Serra d'Or, special issue on 'Catalan tourism of 1976) thus abandoning the Front.

As for the description offered by the Communists, it has undergone like that of the role of the USSR, a development. Maidanik, in 1960 offered a first version (at the time Orwell showed the contradictions of the English Communist journals): the guards were attacked by provocateurs and outcasts from the telephone exchange, but in the fight there were 1,000 members of the POUM and 6,000 members of the CNT, the FM and the Anarchist Youth. In the Levant and Madrid 'The CNT did not join a common cause.'

Two years later, Pritsker in 'Podvik ispanskoy respubliki' added the 'proof' of the quotation from the Nazi archives about Franco's agents (clearly this was a matter of boasting to impress Hitler). The Soviet ex-ambassador to the London Non-intervention Committee, now a doyen of Soviet Hispanism, is the most original of these Communist historians, since in 'Carnets espagnols (1964-1966) he claims that the putsch disarmed the guards and seized the telephone exchange. General Batov, military adviser in Spain (of Lukas on the Aragon Front in February 1937, where he was severely wounded by a shell at the same time as Gustav Regler and Lukas, who died) wrote in *Bajo la bandera de la Espana republicana*' (Russian original of 1965) that the putsch 'was quelled by the workers of the factories and firms in Barcelona.' Finally in 1971 in 'Guerra y Revolucion en Espana' (Moscow, Volume III, by a Spanish Communist Party Collective) we read of 'the lack of foresight of Aiguader' and the neutrality of the 'confederal working-class masses.' One can hope that from now until the year 2000 the Communist historians will still provide us with many details.

The number of victims of these days was more than 800 dead according to Ollivier. The majority of authors quote between 400 and 500 dead and 1,000 wounded. Souchy writes of 1,500 wounded and Maidanik of 950 dead and 2,600 wounded (the collective of the Spanish CP says 500 and 1000). In fact these figures do not take into account the repression that followed these days in May. Orwell asserts that these figures are higher than the number of victims during the days of July 1936 in Barcelona against Franco's troops. Thomas, quoting anarchist sources, gives 500 dead (of which 200 were antifascists) and 3,000 wounded (for two days), which invalidates Orwell's opinion.

Ollivier's conclusions about 'the strength of the anarchists; the indecision of their leaders' and the strengthening of the bourgeoisie was shared at the time by the 'Amigos de Durruti': in 'Hacia una nueva revolucion' (Barcelona 1937), they wrote 'in May, it was time for us to save the Revolution, "we were the only ones to be equal to the situation.'

Now, these conclusions appear identical in the works of all the authors in favour of revolution from below; José Peirats, Vernon Richards, Munis etc.

We will finish with an extract from *Guerra di Classe*, from an insert of 9th May 1937, a supplement to No. 15 dated 3rd May. It shows the ideas of Berneri's comrades:

'Once more and as always, it has been proved that all that is vital and effective in a social movement cannot be anything other than a spontaneous and instinctive expression that comes from below.'

The rank and file have fought and they have fought well and they would have seized Barcelona in the first 24 hours of the fighting if their magnificent and heroic impetus had not been braked by repeated orders from the controlling bodies.'

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



Camillo Berneri, Frank Mintz  
Class War in Spain  
The Writings of Camillo Berneri 1936-1937  
1978

The Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review, Number 4, 1978. Proofread online source  
RevoltLib.com, retrieved on November 19, 2020.  
Reprint of English translations published in "The Writings of Camillo Berneri" compiled by  
Frank Mintz, in *The Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review*, Number 4, 1978. Translations from  
French as published in *Camillo Berneri: Guerre de Classes en Espagne et Textes libertaires* (Paris:  
Spartacus, 1977).

**theanarchistlibrary.org**