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Originally – The Third Stage

Camillo Berneri

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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 Aguiard, 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 snare 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 Novenas 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 the 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!