

War and Revolution

Writings on Spain

Camillo Berneri

1936–1937

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On militarisation of the militias (interview in ‘Spain and the World’)

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 Unificacion 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 social 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.”

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(Translation from *L’Espagne Nouvelle*, February 1937).

War and Revolution

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 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' 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 char-

acteristics 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.

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Classe' No. 13, 21st March 1936[?].

The anarchists in government in Spain — Open letter to comrade 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 València 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 Vilanesa¹. 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.

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 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. València 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 València 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

¹ Vilanesa, small Spanish village where many CNT militants were massacred after their union premises had been looted.

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 Column².' 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.

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

² Fifth Column, name given in Spanish press to the grouping of Fascist organisations existing behind the Republican Front.'

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 'Humanite' of 23rd March.

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

... Or whether 'Pravda' and 'Izvestra' 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.”³

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'⁴ 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 chose 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.'

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' No. 12, 14th April 1937.

³ The translation is incorrect, but the sense is similar; see Mintz 'Self-management in Revolutionary Spain.'

⁴ Phrygian cap, emblem of liberty SCB.

Between the Spanish Civil War and the Spanish Revolution

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 hypocrite, 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 govern-

ments, 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

* * *

Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' No. 6, 16th December 1936.

Madrid, sublime city

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.

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' No. 5, 2nd December, 1936

The Third Stage

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 'Komsosno' 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 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!

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' — No. 7 18th July, 1937.

What can we do?

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.'

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' No. 3. 24th October. 1936

Beware, Dangerous Corner!

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 Ministerialism 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.

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' No. 4, 5th November, 1936.

The Wisdom of a Proverb

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 'Humanite' 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 'Humanite'

"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 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 all 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.

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Article which appeared in 'Guerra di Class' No. 8, 1st February, 1937.

On the militarisation of the Italian column

Rosselli¹ 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.²

* * *

¹ 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).

² 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 'Volonta' 19th July 1951.

Counter Revolution on the March

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 much 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 València on 15th January 1937, “We are not fighting for a Social Revolution. Our organisation is neither Socialist, nor 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.

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Article which appeared in ‘Guerra di Class’ — No. 15, 5th May 1937.

The Death of Berneri

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."

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Camillo Berneri
War and Revolution
Writings on Spain
1936–1937

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