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# In Spain: Socialists killing Socialists

Ida Mett

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January 1932

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of a Noske, dream only of smothering the workers' movement in blood.

The full hatred of the Spanish reactionaries which, with backing from the Socialists, had hitherto been directed at the labour far left of the National Confederation of Labour (CNT) has just, over the past few weeks, been turned on the socialist workers organized within the socialist trade unions of the Workers' General Union (UGT).

The recent slaughter of socialist workers far exceeds the usual murders of syndicalist workers. Here are a few figures lifted at random from the Spanish press: in Épila near Zaragoza, *2 killed and 7 wounded*; in Jereza in Valencia province, *2 killed and 20 wounded*; in Zarameo de la Serena, *2 killed*; in Arnedo, in the La Rioja region, *10 killed*, 3 of them women and one a 4 month-old child, plus *50 wounded*, including a 3 year-old child. The dead and the wounded were all farm workers.

On the Civil Guard side there were some slightly wounded and 4 killed in Castilblanco.

And what has the press to say about this?

### **Savages...?**

It explains all this away in terms of these workers, despite their being members of socialist organizations, not being genuine socialists, "disciplined" and possessed of "traditions". According to the press, these are "savage peasants" who only went over to the UGT after the Republic was proclaimed. Even the socialist press (*El Socialista* in Madrid, say) contends that they are "savages". One need only look at how they dealt with those four Civil Guards in Castilblanco, it argues; it looked as if they had been torn to shreds. But how come the socialist press, filled with such pity for the Civil Guards, failed to display the same sympathy for the 16 young workers killed by the Civil Guard and Assault Guard in Barcelona during the general strike, in which most of them had not even participated?

Even the happenings in Arnedo, where there were women and children killed, have not prompted the Socialist Party to re-examine its attitude. The socialist press persists in declaring that the party has no quarrel with the Civil Guard as an institution, but only with certain isolated abuses!

History repeats itself. Today it is the farm workers who are being written off as “savages”; yesterday, one could read from the pen of that well known socialist Araquistain that if the unionized members of the CNT were permanently in revolt, this was because they were not true Spaniards, but of Moorish descent! And a few years before that, in the wake of the October revolution, “civilized” men belonging to the widest spectrum of parties were likewise querying the origins of the Russian workers’ “barbarism” and tracing it to the fact that we were “Tartars” and “Asiatics” and semi-savages! Which spawned Alexander Blok’s famous poem *The Scythians*: “Yes, we are slant-eyes Scythians ...”

## Or Starvelings?

The Socialist Party refuses to regard socialist workers in revolt as part of its own. And in fact what do a Prieto, a Largo Caballero or a De los Ríos have in common with these illiterate peasants, newcomers to socialism, who imagined that the purpose of joining a socialist organization was to extract some improvements allowing you to, at the very least, avoid starvation. Yes, that is right: *starvation*. There is no exaggeration in that term when we are talking about the farm worker in Spain; even the very moderate socialist deputy Munio told the Cortes that farm-workers suffer from a “fearful starvation”.

Those starving workers have kept quiet and bided their time thus far because they believed that the Constitution was about to deliver them a decent agrarian reform. Because, since the proclamation of the Republic, no matter what reform was mooted, the

answer was always the same: the Cortes will deal with that. Now, the Cortes has finally acted as midwife to an agrarian reform, but such is the latter that it has opened the eyes even of these naïve peasants, these poor “tradition-less” socialists.

Who then are the authentic socialists? Is it minister Prieto, who, in answer to a delegation of railway workers told them that, being a minister, his primary duty was to champion “the general interest”; or the farm labourers who are, after all, fighting precisely to carry through the bourgeois revolution? Because their demands are very modest. What they are after is simply an authentic agrarian reform, a reform that will put paid to the formidable accumulation of land in the hands of a few big landowners incapable of introducing improvements in terms of farming technology and who always thwart the creation of an internal market for Spanish industrial goods due to the exceptionally backward circumstances in which they keep the peasants; just consider this: the Spanish peasant does not use either petrol or candles!

## Towards unity?

Recent events have widened the gulf between the socialist masses and the party’s “top echelons”. Which has thereby opened up a path to unity between both trade union associations. The future hinges on this: are the two trade union organizations, the CNT and the UGT, going to realize, yes or no, that they have overlapping interests and that they need to unite? Will they be able to at least build a loyal united front?

Because there is another alternative. Rather than workers’ unity, there might well come a *pronunciamiento* by some general. In which case the blame would certainly fall, not on these “tradition-less” socialists who have been fighting with the Civil Guards, but the ones who, in keeping with the direst traditions