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# LIVING MARXISM

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No. 6

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This magazine, published by the Groups of Council Communists, consciously opposes all forms of sectarianism. The sectarian confuses the interest of his group, whether it is a party or a union, with the interest of the class. It is our purpose to discover the actual proletarian tendencies in their backward organizational and theoretical forms; to effect a discussion of them beyond the boundaries of their organizations and the current dogmatics; to facilitate their fusion into unified action; and thus to help them achieve real significance.

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## THE JITTERBUGS

"Their Ecstasy is without content."

T. W. ADORNO.

It seems that the world has gone mad, but its apparent insanity is not more than the great fear of millions of isolated individuals that they will succumb to the ever increasing brutal struggle of all against all. The greater their despair, the more disgusting is their clawing and kicking to save themselves — at the expense of the rest of the world. No one knows any longer what he wants, for he doesn't know how to reach it, and many do not even know what they are doing. Like Professor Maier's neurotic rats driven crazy by insoluble problems, they tremble in convulsions, only to collapse from time to time into a stupor. The solution of their problems seems unattainable because it is so simple. Produce and distribute; there is apparently no real barrier to an organization of social life which would remove the present difficulties of the large majority of mankind. Yet the seemingly perverse refusal to consider rational solutions is the only form of sanity possible in the present societal form. Things stand on their heads; the jitterbugs are really the true exponents of present-day reality. To engage all the musical instruments resulting from thousands of years of technical and cultural progress and to revert to an animal stage is very representative of capitalism's tendency to turn all the wonders of the world to the production of more efficient head-hunters. And do not be fooled by the "renaissance" of Fascism; the "goose-step" also belongs to the jitterbugs, as well as does the "new heroism," the "new nationalism," and the hundred thousands of bolshevik parachute jumpers. It is all in line with the enthusiasm of the jitterbugs, who trample each other to death in their mad rush to a free swing concert. Strike up the band!

## HITLER LIED!

So screamed the headlines of "democratic" newspapers. What we wrote in November last year,\* "If necessary, Germany will annex the whole of Czechoslovakia," has already taken place. America, France, and Russia protested; all "peace-loving democratic" people protested; others wept; and even Chamberlain raised his voice in utter disappointment. One week after the celebrated declarations that appeasement seemed to succeed, that armaments may be reduced because they were increased in England, France and the U. S. A., we are one step nearer to the world war. Hitler answered this sort of disarmament with the incorporation of Czechoslovakian resources into the German force. The policy of appeasement, i. e., of postponing the war to make it bloodier, more destructive, and more enduring, necessitates rather than excludes the policy of aggression. Germany must advance; other nations must retreat, or go to war. If Germany proves the pacifier, the other nations must advance. There is no other perspective but that of war.

Professor Wilhelm Roepke,\*\* who is anything but a Marxist, has recently\*\*\* dealt with the economic possibilities of a semi-state capitalist system like the German, or a complete state-capitalist system like the Russian, and he came to very sad conclusions indeed. He found that a "collectivist economy" is not immune to crises, that rather a crisis under conditions of a "planned" or "steered" capitalist economy must of necessity be more destructive and more frightful than anything yet experienced in so-called laissez-faire capitalism. He discovered that capitalism is either an expanding or declining economy; that it cannot stagnate at any level reached. And he cannot see any possibility for a permanent expansion of capital. Because such capitalistic expansion has come to a stop, state interferences in the economic mechanism have become increasingly necessary, a condition excluding more and more a "return" to the old capitalism of private initiative and eliminating in time and in a similar ever greater measure, the use of artifices like public works and armaments, which have temporarily eased the headlock into which capitalism has slipped. "The collapse of the artificial and forced boom would be by far more dangerous than that of an ordinary boom under free-market conditions," says Professor Roepke. And the crisis as before, remains the only "regulator" of economy. If the crisis is to be avoided, the forced boom cannot be relaxed; to maintain it, consumption must be still further reduced. The cessation of this process at any moment would bring the greatest economic disruption, as the whole economy is coordinated to the forced boom, and becomes more and more dependent on it. To avoid collapse, then, expansion by political means becomes a life necessity for capitalism, and imperialistic activity must dominate the world.

When the bicycle made its first appearance, the Turks called it "the thing that cannot stand." It could maintain balance only when in motion. Capitalism, too, especially in its fascistic form, has some sort of balance only

\*Living Marxism. No. 5, p. 132.

\*\*Author of *Crises and Cycles*, London 1936.

\*\*\*Neue Zuericher Zeitung. February 9, 1939.

as long as it moves, which means, expands and accumulates. But the harder Hitler rides the German bicycle, the more he overrides the interests of others. Nothing short of war can stop him. Hitler lied, it is proclaimed today, because after the taking over of the Sudeten region, he had foresworn further European territorial demands. Hitler "lied" because he remained true to those capitalist necessities which dictated the "truth" to Daladier and Chamberlain when they assured Czechoslovakia its independence *after* they had reached their agreement with Hitler at the expense of their ally. The jitterbugs crying today that Hitler is a liar know quite well that lies are the truth of this society, that the more one lies the more honest he is to his own interest.

Which way will Germany turn now? Will it be satisfied with the Danubian area or proceed on the old imperial road towards Baghdad? Will it turn to the Southeast in the direction of Kiev-Baku-Teheran? Will the Rome-Berlin axis remain intact despite German advance in the "natural" hunting grounds of Italy? Will the "democratic powers" retreat further and throw more of "other people's" property to the fascist "blackmailers"? Will the trade war be sharpened in retaliation to the German "grand-scale thievery"? Will the German or the Yankee imperialism triumph south of the Rio Grande? Will the holy alliance against Nazism be formed, and will the Bolsheviks be partners to it? Or will Germany be further appeased, in recognition of the example it set for the whole capitalist world of a destruction of all forms of labor movements on an international scale? It all depends. Despite all secret and open agreements, pacts, alliances, and what not, the present situation does still not allow even an approximation of the possible fronts in the next world war. Capitalist alliances, just like its marriages, lead to Reno. As little as there is true planning of capitalist economy is there any planning of its political activity. As long as there is a chance, not as long as it wants to, Rumania masses troops against the German front and waits for offers from both the fascist and the anti-fascist forces to decide with whom it will cooperate. The impossibility of any real estimation is increased by the continuous threat of civil war in a number of countries. Enemies may become friends overnight, friends may turn into enemies in last minute decisions, or even after the actual outbreak of the war. The chaos of production allows for nothing but the chaos of destruction. The bourgeoisie does not know whom it will kill; it knows only that it will kill. In the imperialistic swing contest all jitterbugs dance to the same music, but each in his own way, without knowing whose toes he will step on next. Only after the outbreak of the war will the chaos assume "order." The efficiency characteristic of the single capitalist enterprise then rules the world at large. Life in capitalism becomes simple as soon as it is designated for death.

## STALIN AND HITLER

Will Germany fight Russia to get the Ukraine? Was it revived by English diplomacy for this particular purpose? At least Stalin seems to think so, and at the recent bolshevik party congress he pointed out that those people who "want to embroil the Soviet Union in war with Germany," will

be disappointed, as such a war is "without any visible basis." The Nazi anti-Commintern pact, Stalin said further, was a screen behind which to attack not Russia, but vital interests of Britain, France, and America. Notwithstanding declarations to the contrary by both Hitler and Stalin, the possibility of their coming to an agreement is by no means a fantastic conception. Not only does Stalin's speech indicate the tenableness of such a view, but the whole history of German-Russian relations since the Treaty of Rapollo makes it plausible. It was not Russia that disturbed the friendly relations with Nazi-Germany, but Hitler. It must be remembered that many months after Hitler's ascendancy to power, the Russian GPU shot down a score of German Communist party members for the sole reason that they had demonstrated before the German Consulate in Moscow for the release of their leader Thaelman. What anti-Nazism existed in Russia and was indulged because for the time being Hitler did not need Stalin's friendship, was accompanied by an anti-Communist policy more ruthless than that existing in Germany. No, there is no ideological reason existing which could render impossible a Hitler-Stalin alliance. Such an alliance can be excluded only by the constellation of the opposing imperialistic forces, but any shift in this constellation may, on the other hand, effect a Russian-German harmony. And if this should be the case, be assured that the jitterbugs of the Communist Parties and their sympathizers will be just as enthusiastic allies of Hitler as they are today proponents of the united front of democratic powers. The "fatherland" must be saved, and they will be certain that Stalin will make use of Hitler rather than Hitler of Stalin. The "Trojan Horse" will then simply have been moved for them into the fascistic camp.

### THE PEOPLES' FRONT

The capitalist concentration and centralization process cannot stop on national borders. The more limited competition becomes within the nations, the sharper it becomes in world economy. And the essential method in this struggle is war. War presupposes an efficient war machinery and people ready to go to war. To prepare for external struggles, "peace" must be established at home. The bourgeoisie can no longer guarantee such peace with traditional methods. A new ideology is necessary, which, although it is intended to secure capitalism, is no longer strictly capitalistic. "National-Socialism," the "Cooperative State," the "Soviet Union," in countries already fascist, and "People's Front" attempts in countries on the way to fascism, displace the old and discredited concepts based on a more willing acceptance of class relations. The People's Front was practically a substitute for fascism, its success could only mean its improvement till it became an equal to fascism. Under it, the energy of dissatisfied masses was directed into the proper channels; concessions were granted until the State was strengthened sufficiently to handle the masses once and for all, and now all the gains of the People's Front period in France, which were made by the wave of direct action of the workers in 1936, are lost. The authoritarian regime, which was to be combatted by the People's Front policy, was actually prepared and brought into existence by it. To fight against the Rome-Berlin axis, legalistic

fascistic methods were adopted in an ever greater measure. Today, thanks to the People's Front policy, the French workers are practically in the same position as those of Germany. Not fascist organizations but labor organizations have brought this about. The People's Front policy turns out to be no more than a war instrument leading to the only democracy possible under capitalistic conditions, the democracy of the graveyards.

### OFFICIALS MAKE ESCAPE

All countries prepare for war. All existing contradictions are continually sharpened. All economy is directed towards the war, as well as all propaganda. This situation will not change until the workers change it by refusing to see in wars a means for their own salvation, by refusing to look for their own interests in those of their masters'. The great interest the workers display today in the political scenery constructed by their masters is deadly. In reality, whatever alliances will be made or whatever situations arise, is of no concern to the working class. Of concern alone is the fact that any war for any purpose not strictly proletarian means the sacrifice of lives for the benefit of the enemy of the workers. We still remember the cry of horror raised by all "anti-fascists" when Franco's bombers killed women and children in the streets of Madrid. The same people who were so horrified, and who gave thanks for their liberal defender Miaja, did not hesitate a second to send their own bombers under the command of the same Miaja to kill and maim the women and children of Madrid. We still hear the "heroes" of the People's Front in Spain denouncing as cowards anarchist workers who refused to submit at once to the counterrevolutionary policy of the "Communist" controlled Madrid government, and we see them now fleeing the country which they just have sold out, fleeing into safety, into a life of leisure and contemplation. Officials always make their escape. They always have an airplane or two reserved for themselves, proclaiming to the last, that is, till the actual takeoff, "We will rather die than surrender!" For the workers there is always left the firing squad. All wars today are wars against the working class. All propaganda for unity of the people for purpose of war, are directed against the workers. There never was, there never will be, not even temporarily, an identity of interests of workers and leaders, workers and governments, workers and capitalists. But it will take much more disappointment and suffering to make workers realize this. Till then, the jitterbugs will continue to dance toward their own destruction.

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## UNION UNITY?

There can be no doubt that Roosevelt is the man for labor. The old watchword of the labor movement, in union there is strength, came into new glory in Roosevelt's recent letters to the champions of labor, John L. Lewis and William Green. "The American people," it read, "sincerely hope that a constructive negotiated peace with honor may come about between the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O." Specifically, "The National Manufacturers Association," it continued, "express now a better understanding of the problems of labor relationships and greater willingness to work with labor in a realistic effort to improve their mutual relations and to better general working conditions."

A further testimony of class harmony is the recent United States Supreme Court decision upholding the firing of 92 workers engaged about a year ago in a sitdown strike in North Chicago, and the sending of some of their leaders to the prison, where they will have ample time to reason out further improvements in capital-labor relations. This trend towards "mutual understanding" comes to light still further in diverse legalistic attempts to discourage workers' strikes with a series of obstacles. We need mention here only the Catlin bill passed by the Wisconsin assembly, which prohibits picketing of industrial plants unless it can be proved that a majority of workers actually wants to go on strike; and the marvelous class peace established by the way of the so-called "Oregon system," which last November established, "the strictest measures for regulation of labor unions in the United States," consisting of measures drastically restricting strike picketing, jurisdictional disputes, and, beside other smaller items, the outlawing of boycotts; the new city ordinance in Flint, Michigan, which forbids intimidation of workers going to and from their places of employment, or assembly in groups without authority of law in public places, streets, and highways.

Though many roads lead to Rome, a main highway is always welcome. Though each village, city, and state may be able to lead successful battles against its striking workers, it may still be necessary to centralize all these efforts in order to increase their effect. Nation-wide organizations must be dealt with by nation-wide measures. The chaotic self-help activity of localities and the state-wide organized groups of employers, cannot sufficiently insure the industrial peace desired today. The centralization of economic and political control in the hands of the Federal government to strengthen the capitalist society during the present period of despair and emergencies incorporates first of all the control over labor.

The unions are still able to serve the needs of industrial peace, but to serve the needs of the government and the capitalist class better, their present disunity has to be brought to an end. The recent militancy of labor was largely the result of the competitive struggle between labor organizations rather than the result of class struggles. As long as the war between the A. F. of L. and C. I. O. goes on, it will be difficult to establish the tight control over labor that is deemed necessary because of the fact that the

depression will not end. There were even strikes and picket lines for the sole purpose of collecting union dues. There were battles and workers killed in jurisdictional disputes quite independent of all labor-employer relations. There was continuous unrest in society because of the many signs that the workers quite often could not be tamed by labor leaders, and there is widespread suspicion that profitability of enterprise will altogether come to an end if recent labor policies will be continued.

There are no signs of recovery. The capitalists press for reduction of labor costs, and they must be appeased in the face of the continuous need of higher and still higher budgets to cope with newly arising internal and external problems. A unified labor movement at the disposal of the government might not only help the present Administration in the coming presidential campaign, but might be a still greater help in securing industrial peace, despite the coming attacks upon the workers' standard of living. There were 477 sit-down strikes in 1937, involving 398,177 workers. A repetition of 1937 has to be avoided; and the best means to this end is a unified labor movement of the type which Mr. Martin before the Association of Detroit Business Men recently described in the following manner:\*

"If we have been slow in educating our membership to the responsibilities which go with union membership, the blame for much of this slowness must be directly attributed to the fact that we had to devote so much of our resources, and so much of our efforts in the struggle to merely exist in the face of strong opposition. ...As a penalty for their efforts to hinder and obstruct the organization of workers many employers have had to put up with annoying outbreaks of spontaneous strikes of their employees and have been faced with the task of dealing with hotheaded or untrained union committeemen and minor officials... I wish to call to your attention that the number of authorized strikes in the automobile industry has been greatly reduced in the last several months until now they occur only in exceptional cases."

Such unions and their unity, with the right political attitude, are the best security for the capitalist society at this stage of development. And Mr. Martin actually spoke the truth when he said,\*\*

"It seems to me that the only thing which American citizens need to fear is the unintelligent and unorganized participations of labor in political affairs, or the failure of labor to participate at all in politics."

Roosevelt has seen the sign of the time, and what the whole working class could not achieve, that is, the coming together of Lewis and Green to discuss peace, supposedly of such great interest to labor, was made possible by one gesture of the great Executive. But this very fact illustrates sufficiently that that unity of labor possible today is not an unity serving labor needs. This government established unity will, if anything, only serve the capitalist government. If the capitalists themselves don't establish such a unity in their own interest, it will not come about. Unions will split and unite and split again. Unions are forms of income and forms of control over the workers, and the owners of labor unions compete with each other even more sharply than do the capitalists. The real unity of labor can be established only against their

\*United Automobile Worker, December 17, 1938, p. 5.

\*\*Ibid.

organizations, against the governments, against capitalist society. How far away we are from such real unity may be seen if only by the fact that the very workers which Martin wants to train to become "respectable union men", no longer following "hotheads" and "minor officials" but Martin, and Martin alone, climaxed their recent revival meeting, or convention, in Detroit with gifts demonstrating their genuine affection for several of the union leaders. Before the members of a Ford local from Kansas City had concluded their presentation of a radio to Martin the other day, tears were streaming from the eyes of several as they stood on the convention platform. Really, there are reasons to cry.

## THE CONCENTRATION CAMP GROWS

The last session of the executive board of the Socialist International dealt with the "struggle for democracy." What was remarkable about these discussions, one reporter remarked, "was the consistency with which the socialist parties in the still democratic countries remained true to their traditional ways of thinking. For them, now as before, socialism progresses step by step, legally, democratically; otherwise socialism will never come."\* One of the delegates was annoyed enough to ask "if the executive has ever tried to imagine what goes on in the brain of a man in a fascist concentration camp?" Another labor leader answered that "it is quite understandable that people living under fascism develop extreme political opinions," — for which they might then be excused.

Extreme political opinions are all right as long as they are not applied. They are fully in order as long as they remain mere opinions, dreams of a faraway future in which nobody really believes. And they are all right also for workers in concentration camps, and even perfect for those facing firing squads. Otherwise, however, they are considered entirely unrealistic, for the leaders of labor are convinced that there will be no socialism unless instituted by the bourgeoisie itself. It is different, then, when the bourgeoisie employs extreme political measures; force is applauded as soon as it is "legal." The most extreme political opinions become the norm if only they serve the needs of the ruling class.

In Spain, in the July days of 1936, in Catalonia and other regions, the "extreme political opinions" of workers stopped the fascist rebellion and established the basis for a real proletarian struggle against capitalism. This basis was soon destroyed, to the satisfaction of all the "moderate" and "sensible" people and with the help of those who relegate extreme political opinions into the concentration camps. With the disappearance of all extreme measures in the workers' struggle, it became only a question of time till one or the other dictatorship *over* the workers would be installed, and merely a question of imperialistic rivalries as to under which flag and specific method the dictatorship would be exercised. Spain was not lost for the workers when

\*Der Sozialistische Kampf. Paris, January 28, 1939. p. 35.

Franco's soldiers drove the Loyalist army over the French border; it was lost at the time the initiative of the fight against fascism had shifted from the hands of the more or less spontaneously acting workers exclusively into those of their leaders, and from them into the hands of the government.

## II.

Marxism is sometimes called a theory of defeat. It excels all other approaches to history in that it is always able to explain why the one or the other defeat simply had to happen. It is ready to cite economic, political, and ideological reasons for all occurring failures, and is always inclined to remove the sting of the defeat with the assurance that the course of history will finally bring the success so often necessarily denied. For us, however, Marxism is neither a theory of defeat nor of success. It is a theory of the class struggle in capitalist society, and predicts success to the strongest class. It is true that in recognizing the growing importance of the proletarian class in society and the increasing difficulties of the bourgeoisie, there is no other prediction possible than that which maintains that the sharpening class antagonism under permanent crisis conditions will eventually enforce a change of society through proletarian action. Aside from this unavoidable prediction, however, it must be said that for the present class struggles, this hopeful perspective means as little as the statement that society is subject to change. The recognition of developmental trends is no weapon for defeating an actual enemy. Each struggle that arises has to be judged on its own merits. Any decision for action and evaluation of forces must base itself on immediate realities.

This is itself difficult enough. The weakness and strength of classes are of relative importance. They come to light in manifold shiftings of situations and relations, escaping again and again correct measurement. Situations in which a "weak proletariat" overthrows a "strong bourgeoisie", may arise just as easily as situations in which a "strong proletariat" falls victim to a "weak bourgeoisie." The historical trend gives no answer to the needs of a specific situation. The latter is determined rather by a multitude of interacting and counteracting forces within the world scene, which no one can really comprehend sufficiently to base his actions on a "correct theory." The whole of the existing socio-economic relations precludes a really planned revolution as well as it precludes a planned economy or any other kind of planning of social life in capitalism. The theorist has to be satisfied with approximations. The revolutionist has to take risks. The proof of the force of the revolution rests in the revolution itself.

Only spontaneous reactions to changed situations bring about real class movements. In such situations, each class can act correctly only insofar as it acts in accordance with its specific needs. The bourgeoisie cannot act for the workers, nor the latter for the bourgeoisie, unless it sacrifices its own class interests. The Spanish workers were defeated the moment when, considering more than their own class needs, they did not hinder the transformation of the anti-capitalist into the anti-fascist struggle.

### III.

There are, and there will be, brought forward a number of reasons why the Loyalists were defeated. The "Marxists" will have the "best" explanations. They will point to the general backwardness of Spain, which excluded from the beginning a success of the revolutionary forces — as if Spain was not a part of the world but situated on another planet. They will point out the "betrayals" of the "democratic nations" which, against their "better interests," sacrificed Spain as they had before sacrificed Czechoslovakia and Ethiopia — as if these countries could have "principles" to which they could be true or untrue. They will say that "non-intervention" was not "non-intervention" but action against the Loyalists — as if the bourgeoisie has not always spoken of "order" when it defended disorder, of peace when it prepared for war, of non-intervention the more it intervened. Or they will blame the Anarchists, and they, in turn, the "Communists," and both will be blamed by the Trotskyites, who will score new triumphs from this new evidence that no revolution can succeed without a "real" Leninist party and a "real" International.

However, all these arguments will be brought forward not so much as explanations of the defeat, but rather as excuses for inactivity, or as attempts to screen counter-revolutionary activities, or simply as business tricks to cash in on the defeat of the Spanish workers. In this connection it must be noted that until the actual defeat, all supporters of the Loyalist cause could see nothing but the inevitability of the Republican victory. The more the workers were driven back by their own anti-fascist government, the nearer seemed to be Franco's end. But now that the Loyalists are finished, these same people, forgetting all their previous predictions, are just as ready to explain down to the last detail why Franco won. Like the sellers of any other commodity, the salesmen for the Loyalist cause had to guarantee their ware as safe, secure, and everlasting, till it rotted away under their fingers. This business gone, they will now turn again from the selling of actual goods to the selling of mere recipes for the next political stew. In accordance with the formula "maybe I'll wake up dead tomorrow,"\* the cookbooks of the diverse People's Front parties, the anarchists included, will be able only to prescribe a warming up of what has already decayed.

We are very little interested in proving once more that Marxists know best what hits them. We were not very much excited over the Loyalist cause as such, over embargo questions, non-intervention, betrayals of "democratic nations," or desertions of labor organizations and leaders. All these conditions were to be expected and they did not even surprise those apparently innocent people who imagined the ruling classes of democratic countries to be interested in the "anti-fascist" struggle in Spain. With their empty chatter as to the wonders of bolshevik discipline, the geniality of Caballero, and the passions of the Pasionaria, the "modern liberals" merely covered up their real desire for the destruction of all revolutionary possibilities latent in the Civil War and their preparation for the possible war over the Spanish issue in the interest of

\*M. Fraenkel in "The Phoenix". Vol. I, No. 2, p. 102.

their diverse fatherlands. Their slogans, policies, predictions, demands, however different in sound, were of the same character and functioned in the same way as the non-intervention phrase of the bourgeoisie proper.

### IV.

Of interest to us are precisely those aspects of the Spanish Civil War which have no interest at all for anti-fascist organizations. As in all previous uprisings of workers and pauperized peasants, the outstanding fact was that the masses of Spain were more radical, more "left", more extreme, than their leaders and the organizations controlled by them. Not that they operated against their organizations, not that they saw a barrier between themselves and their organizations, but the change of policy which came about as soon as the uprising turned into the order of the new regime, shows sufficiently that there was a wider gap between the acting masses and their organizations than the workers were as yet able to realize. The mass actions in the summer and fall of 1936, in which organized and unorganized workers participated, were neither instigated, nor directed, nor extended, by the official leadership of the various organizations, the anarchist trade unions included, but by the workers themselves and by the force of circumstance to which the workers bidden or unbidden reacted. Their activities in the economic sphere are described at another place in this issue.\* Here we will state only that what was truly revolutionary in the Spanish Civil War resulted from the direct actions of the workers and pauperized peasants, and not because of a specific form of labor organization nor an especially gifted leadership. It must be said, however, that the greater freedom within the less centralized anarcho-syndicalist unions was reflected in a greater self-initiative of anarcho-syndicalist workers. The revolutionary results of the spontaneous actions of the Spanish workers in the July days disappeared with the change from self-initiative and self-action of the workers to organization decrees, party decisions, and governmental rule, and the whole machinery set up anew to control the masses.

Just as in Russia the Bolsheviks were only belatedly and reluctantly ready to recognize the accomplished expropriation of the means of production by the workers through the "nationalization" of industry, so in Spain, or to be specific, in Catalonia, the Generalitat—the Government — published the Decree of Collectivization in October, 1936,\*\* after the collectivization had already been carried out. "The decree, which apparently answered the needs of the Catalan workers, and which was received with great joy by the majority of them, was in reality a filching of socialization."\*\*\* It not only restricted collectivization; the workers ceased to be real masters of the means of production through a clever organizational arrangement which made the Ministry of Economy the real ruler. Private commerce, furthermore, was

\*Collectivization in Spain. (Certain statements in this article, however, are not shared by the Groups of Council Communists.)

\*\*Compare Council Correspondence. Vol. II, No. 11; Vol. III, No. 3, and Vol. III, No. 5.

\*\*\*Gaston Leval, Social Reconstruction in Spain. London 1938, p. 7.

retained in its entirety. The unions were not directing production, but hoped to do so eventually. Even if they would have succeeded, not the workers but the union bureaucracy, on the basis of their conceptions of socialization, would have controlled production, and, with that, distribution. "We have not made the Revolution in Catalonia yet," wrote the anarchist Santillan.\*

"The traditional program of the CNT is certainly not that which has been put in practice since July 19th... The new State of Catalonia is neither better nor more tolerable than the old one. It is worse. And it is worse because the bureaucratic parasitism is greater. The bureaucracy threatens to devour the revolution and to this danger we contribute along with all the anti-fascist parties in a considerable degree."

Legal collectivization was the end of real collectivization. In February, 1938, the *New York Times* could write happily:

"The principle of State intervention and control of business and industry, as against workers' control of them in the guise of collectivization, is gradually being established in Loyalist Spain by a series of decrees now appearing. Coincidentally there is to be established the principle of private ownership and the rights of corporations and companies to what is lawfully theirs under the Constitution."

## V.

It is often thought that the anarchists had to retreat before the governmental forces, and cooperate with them, because they failed to establish their own political power instruments. It is assumed that the anarchists did not pay sufficient attention to the political needs of the revolution, because they were convinced that whoever controls industry also controls society, and that the real power was already transferred to the workers and their syndicates, and that, under such conditions, even the participation in the government was no break with anarchist principles, as this political government had already been reduced to a mere extension of the economic government. However, the truth of the matter is that in the beginning, the anarchists had both political and economic power, the former being expressed in the armed workers and the temporary disappearance of the official government. They did not choose between the one or the other set of powers, but sacrificed both in the interest of anti-fascist harmony. They accepted the collectivization decree as well as the order to disarm the workers' militias, for they actually preferred the mere anti-fascist to a decisive struggle against capitalism. The CNT entered the government precisely at that moment when the curtailment of workers' power began, and helped to prepare the ground on which it later was to slide down itself to become a mere servant to the strictly capitalistic government. The latter controlled all spheres of the social and economic life through the "civil guards, the assault guards, and all the other forces of repression which it especially organized. And the workers had lost their battle."\*\*\*

There existed for the anarchist organizations two possibilities: They could either drive the anti-capitalist struggle forward, or subordinate them-

\*D. A. Santillan, *After the Revolution*. New York 1937; pp. 121/125.

\*\*Leval, *Social Reconstruction in Spain*, p. 9.

selves under the anti-fascist capitalistic government and its limited objectives. That this government was out to safeguard capitalism, the anarchists knew, that to support this government could only mean that the CNT, too, had to help to coordinate the masses to those limited goals, they also knew. To drive the anti-capitalist struggle forward meant to set the anarchist workers and their followers against the whole of the capitalist world. If the international proletariat would not come to their help, there seemed only the certainty that they would have been crushed by the overwhelming strength of the external and internal counter-revolution. The same result would have happened if the workers, independent of their organizations, would have expanded the power gained during the first weeks of the revolution. Not only to save themselves, but to save also the revolutionary workers from certain defeat, the anarchist organizations felt it necessary to hamper the continuation of the revolution, and to seek a compromise with the counter-revolutionary anti-fascist forces. The simple consideration that one enemy is better than two explains the action of the anarchists, and it is here of no real importance to note that this consideration harmonized also with the specific organizational interests and aspirations of ambitious leaders. They were reasonably convinced that a Spanish revolution would not arouse the international working class to solidarity action, and thus, aside from all other considerations connected with the diverse "vested interests" which bound large labor organizations to capitalist society, they were willing to accept a compromise solution. Their class collaboration policy could lead to nothing but the immediate defeat of the workers' interests in this revolution and the gearing of those workers to struggles determined by interests foreign to them.

It is argued in defense of the anarchist tactics that after all they enabled the anti-fascist struggle to proceed two years longer than would have been the case if a struggle for all or nothing would have been carried on. "Whatever one's opinion of the tactics of the Spanish struggle might be," writes *Senex* in the February (1939) issue of *Vanguard*,

"there can be no dispute about the overwhelming historic significance of this struggle. It acted as a formidable breakwater to the sweeping fascist wave. That it continued acting in this capacity for more than two years was due in no small measure to the realistic policy pursued by the revolutionary forces affording them some chances of survival as, against the certainty of a total annihilation facing them two years ago."

This argument may as well be turned around, and it may be said with the same assurance that if two years of anti-fascist struggle were without avail, nothing will prevent fascism from coming to power. Two years of hopeless struggle may impress and depress workers equally; the result is what really counts at present. And as regards the "certainty of total annihilation facing them two years ago," the present Franco victory will neglect this phase of the matter least of all, and we need not speak of the hundreds of thousands of workers killed and wounded during the preceding years, butchered by fascists and anti-fascists alike.



## VI.

The discussions as to the "wrong" or "right" tactics of the *anarchists* are quite beside the point. The CNT contained reformist, opportunist, compromising elements as well as consistent proletarian revolutionists. In Catalonia they represented a revolutionary force, which nevertheless, could act as such only under conditions favoring consistent revolutionary actions. With the change of those conditions the conformist elements within the CNT began to dominate the organizations, still further hampering the exertion of revolutionary energies. The radical elements within the CNT were defeated by their own organization as well as by the general developmental trend. There were not "wrong" or "right" anarchist tactics; there were two different tactics, and the radical tendency was defeated because it was defended by a small minority under extremely unfavorable conditions. Their revolutionary phraseology could serve only to cover up the non-revolutionary practice of the organization as a whole. Even the revolutionists had to serve the counter-revolution.

After the first successful attacks upon the fascist counter-revolution, new decisions had to be made. Fascism could not be crushed with a few bold strokes. The future held war, and the necessities of this war began to determine all actions. Germany and Italy intervened in their own and Franco's interests. England, France, and Russia were unwilling to apply the same methods of intervention, for to send French against Italian troops meant to come too close to a war which they did not want just yet. Their intervention had the twofold task of destroying all revolutionary potentialities of the Civil War, and of preventing the subjugation of Spain under the complete dominance of the Rome-Berlin axis. Russia was selected as best fitted to perform the actual destruction of the revolutionary forces latent in the Civil War, and to change the character of the war to a diplomatic game enforced by blood and fire. Weapons and illusion were imported into Spain, weapons to exclude a speedy victory of Franco and Illusions as to the character of the expected help from the "democratic countries," an attitude which helped to turn mass opinion against consistent revolutionary policies. Under the pressure of the fascist armies, it seemed necessary, in order to avoid defeat, to rely upon help from countries opposed to Italian-German imperialism. The foreign invasion, furthermore, gave the anti-fascist struggle an outspoken nationalistic turn. The non-revolutionary elements in the Loyalist camp were made more enthusiastic by the slogan "Spain for the Spaniards," than by anti-capitalistic propositions. All but questions of war were postponed. All but the war parties lost immediately in influence. The organizations concerned exclusively with the defeat of Franco and seemingly able to attract outside help became the dominating organizations. The postponement of the social revolution considerably reduced the influence of the revolutionists upon the masses. What they said did not matter, and what they did was exactly what everybody else had to do. Russian tanks, airplanes, foodships, were realities which were more emphatic than all the revolutionary principles.

The same gold that bought "help" from Russia also bought arms from the German enemy. This, however, was brought to light by Negrin only after the defeat of his government. It shows, nevertheless, that the "help" rendered by Russia had no other motive than had the German intervention. Russia sold weapons in order to strengthen the position of her French ally by attempting to hamper the German advance in Spain, and Germany sold weapons to the same side in order to impress upon Franco the need for German and Italian help to gain his objectives. The struggle in Spain was prolonged and extended and hampered because of the rivalries between the various countries involved. In this process, however, the imperialistic features of this war became the clearer the more the revolutionary aspects disappeared, and it was only a question of time when the support of the Loyalist could mean nothing but the obvious support of one imperialistic camp against another.

If Franco must be defeated, so must the revolution. This attitude explains the intervention of the "democratic" powers. A speedy victory of the Loyalists could very well mean the releasing of the revolutionary energies latent in the Civil War situation, especially in view of the restless workers in France. However, if it were possible to win Franco for the English-French interests, his victory would be desired, for he would be better able to establish that "order" in society which best secures the continuation of capitalism. Difficulties in Franco's way may force him to reconsider his alliances; the need for capital at any rate may draw him into the English camp. Never were the "anti-fascist" powers anti-fascist, their struggle was directed against a Spanish fascism not friendly to British interests. The Loyalists were supported by the "democratic" powers just as far as was necessary to impress upon Franco the need to consider England and France and just as far as was necessary to give the capitalistic elements on the Loyalist side dominance in the Civil War.

The defeat of the Loyalists and, with that, the success of fascism corresponded to the external and internal needs of Italy and Germany. The reasons for their intervention were always clear. However, a speedy victory of Franco would increase his independence, and the danger that he might, though a fascist to the core, come to terms with the "democratic" countries in his own interest, caused the fascist countries to send just as many troops and ammunitions as were necessary only to maintain him, so that he might always realize that his success depended on the continued support of the Rome-Berlin axis. The whole mystery which surrounded the Civil War was due to the fact that here was a war fought between imperialistic nations which had at this time no desire to enter upon a general world conflict. It was a war which, furthermore, was crossed with social upheavals within the country that provided the battle ground for the imperialistic rivalries, and in which not even the interests of the allies in each camp were properly coordinated, for England acted against French interests and Germany against Italian interests. Under cover of "non-intervention", this manifold struggle of diverse forces could best proceed. Thus the play of the next world war was rehearsed on the model stage of Spain.