

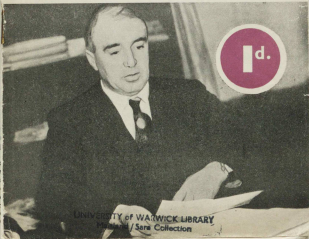
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1955-56-57

Spain:

WHAT NEXT?

By Harry Pollitt



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SPAIN: *What Next?*

By HARRY POLLITT

It is understandable that the present situation in Spain should arouse anxiety and keen questioning as to how it has come about, that in spite of a heroic resistance unparalleled in history, fascism has yet been able to achieve its present position in Spain.

It should, however, be clear to everyone that the main responsibility for the present situation rests not on the Spanish Popular Front or the Negrin Government, but on the Chamberlain Government.

The Casado dictatorship is the logical result of Chamberlain's policy of active intervention on the side of the fascists since July, 1936. He has assisted them in every form, and has done so under the false slogan of "non-intervention," which he even deceived the Labour Party into supporting for a year, as he is now deceiving it into supporting so-called "National Service."

Responsibility for "Non-Intervention"

For a long time there has been an attempt to blame the policy of non-intervention on the French Government. The real instigator was exposed by J. Longuet, editor of the Socialist paper *Le Populaire*:

"When the Civil War in Spain broke out, the French Government desired to support the Spanish Government. They consulted Downing Street, who warned them that if such action involved France in wider conflicts, this country would not consider that a justification for Britain's support under the treaties. The Belgians took a similar view. Being faced by this decision by Britain and Belgium, the French Government found this compromise of non-intervention."

Even after its criminal results were plain for all the world to see, the Labour Party Executive supported non-

intervention, and the *Daily Herald* came to the defence of the National Government in a leading article on March 15th, 1937, which declared :

"If Labour does not denounce non-intervention, it is because Labour is not convinced it would help the Spanish people. It has reason for believing it would help the fascists."

The official Labour movement continued to support non-intervention for nearly a year, when the pressure of its own rank and file compelled it to reverse its policy.

But at no stage during the heroic struggle of the Spanish people, has the Labour Party Executive been prepared to take those decisive steps which might have brought overwhelming strength against the whole policy of Chamberlain. "Non-intervention" therefore continued in operation. And the Munich Pact of Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Mussolini was not only directed to betraying Czechoslovakia, but also against Republican Spain. It was quickly followed by Chamberlain's visit to Rome, during which he undoubtedly gave his blessing to the Italian offensive in Catalonia.

Active Intervention

As a result of the overwhelming weight of arms brought to bear against them, the Republican armies in Catalonia were at last defeated. And at this point Chamberlain moved to the next stage in his policy of destroying Republican Spain—active intervention on behalf of Franco.

Immediately after the fall of Barcelona, representatives of the British and French Governments put the strongest possible pressure on Negrin for unconditional surrender.

Simultaneously they were acting in the most dastardly manner in the annals of international diplomacy; their representatives, in alliance with Franco, had already established contact with Azana, who proved a willing tool, as well as with military leaders like Casado and Miaja, and the leading Republican naval officers. These measures received the full support of the traitors round Caballero, the P.O.U.M., and the reactionary sections of the Anarchists

—this unholy combination being united only on one thing : to bring about the defeat of Negrin and the forcible suppression of the Communist Party of Spain.

The first open move, in association with the reactionary Government of Daladier, came with the occupation of Minorca by Franco's forces, organised and carried out by Chamberlain through the utilisation of the British cruiser " Devonshire."

The occupation of Minorca was speedily followed by the undermining of Negrin's position through the recognition of Franco, the prearranged resignation of Azana, and then by the fascist rising at Cartagena, the surrender of the Republican fleet, and the formation of the Junta in Madrid under the leadership of Casado and Miaja. The offensive was opened, not against Franco, but against Negrin and the Communist Party.

There are those who cannot understand the apparently sudden collapse of the united resistance to Franco and the fascist invaders.

Workers, above all, however, will know how to approach the Spanish problem correctly, for they know very well that in the course of any prolonged strike or lock-out there are always people who say: "It has gone on long enough." These capitulators are a prey to every lying rumour that the employers circulate. How much more are such ideas likely to find expression in Spain, after thirty-two months of bitter struggle.

Especially when territory is lost, towns are destroyed, hundreds of thousands forced to seek refuge in France, and there is sabotage from within, defeatism, treachery, loss of faith in the chance of victory, all raise their heads. And when, in addition, the so-called democratic governments of Britain and France not only desert Spanish democracy, but send in their agents to foment and encourage all these sentiments and to seek out those they can use, the titanic tasks that faced the Negrin Government are obvious.

A word here in regard to the part played by Miaja. His defection from the Republican ranks was a very heavy blow which caused universal surprise in Britain. But to

those who had followed the Spanish situation very closely, it had been clear for some time that Miaja, in spite of his press pronouncements, was not carrying out the same policy of struggle that characterised him in the 1936 defence of Madrid. When the magnificently successful Ebro offensive of the Spanish Government was planned last spring and summer, the strategical plan also included big offensives in Central Spain under the leadership of Miaja. These did not take place, and this fact was already indicative of the growing opposition that the Negrin Government were facing from the military leadership, which however, still professed a certain loyalty to the Spanish Republic.

But again let it be emphasised that even this *coup d'etat* could never have been organised and carried through by Casado and Miaja but for the fact that the Negrin Government had to face not only Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, but the open intervention of Chamberlain and Daladier. This is what must be rammed home to the people in this country. The fascist peace at any price which this combination is determined to establish in Spain will not only turn over the Spanish people to the mercies of a Franco dictatorship, but also gives Mussolini and Hitler further outposts against the democratic people of France and Britain.

Was Resistance Possible ?

Many people will now say that it would have been the best thing to end the struggle at any price. They are wrong. Resistance could have been organised in Central Spain. All the necessary possibilities existed—a powerful army, war materials and strong defensive positions. Resistance would have made possible the kind of peace that Negrin has always demanded—a peace that would provide for the independence and integrity of Spain, freedom from all foreign influences and a free life for the Spanish people, with no persecution of the civilian population and no reprisals.

This resistance would have been strengthened by the hostility to the Italian and German invaders which was

increasing in Franco territory, by the growing support of the democratic people all over the world, and by the changes taking place in the international situation.

Was the Struggle Necessary?

There will be others who, under the pressure of recent events, may question whether all the sacrifice of life and effort was necessary, or whether it has been in vain. This viewpoint, however understandable, is wrong. If one thing has been proved since 1933, it is that if fascism had not been resisted, it would to-day be riding roughshod over the world.

The Austrians were right to resist in February, 1934. The Abyssinian people were right to resist in 1935. The Spanish were a thousand times right, and their resistance to fascism has been the most prolonged and glorious of all.

It has done more than anything else to weaken the Rome-Berlin axis. It has completely dislocated all the international plans of the fascist powers. It has increased the contradictions between Germany, Italy and Franco. It has strengthened the mass opposition to fascism inside Germany, Austria and Italy, which to-day is a source of serious concern to Hitler and Mussolini. It has awakened millions to political consciousness and recognition of the danger of fascism.

The struggle of the Spanish people against fascism has evoked the greatest demonstration of international solidarity the world has ever seen. It has taken the form of food, money and medical supplies, and the organisation for the first time in history of an international brigade composed of anti-fascists from all lands. This international solidarity has bound the people of every country in the world closer together than ever before, in a way which will prove to be of still greater value in the battles that lie ahead.

The Spanish struggle has taken tens of thousands of heroic lives; but it has saved the people of Britain and France from being already involved in a new world war, and the sacrifice has not been and will not be in vain.

It is not the first time in history that such a situation has developed. It happened at the time of the Paris Commune, and how Marx lashed the enemies of the people in words that we need to remember to-day!

"Working men's Paris with its Commune will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of the new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them. . . ."

"The Paris workers have been crushed by superior force—crushed, but not destroyed. Yet it is their opponents who are really vanquished."

The great tragedy to-day is that there was no need for Republican Spain to have been crushed. The Negrin Government, fully supported by the Communist Party of Spain, was correct in wanting to continue the struggle, and history will judge them to be the true and faithful custodians not only of the interests of the Spanish people, but of all democratic and progressive mankind.

The Attack on the Communists

We have often stated that Chamberlain is desirous of establishing fascism in Britain; that he hates and fears the working-class movement, the liberation movement in the Colonies and the Soviet Union. The present events in Spain amply prove that this is true.

Chamberlain's nominee, Casado, was required to hand over to Franco the leading political and military leaders of the Negrin Government and the entire leadership of the Communist Party of Spain.

Promptly armed forces occupy the Communist Party headquarters. Thousands of Communists are arrested. The working class streets are menaced by tanks and heavy artillery in order to intimidate the population from rising against the betrayal of Negrin's policy.

Yet even this display of force did not prevent loyal supporters of the Negrin Government and the People's Front in Madrid from endeavouring to continue their resistance, a fact of the greatest political significance.

Who in those days of struggle in Madrid, could read without feelings of burning anger, the leading article in the *Daily Herald* on Friday, March 10, which endeavoured to cover up its previous support of Chamberlain's policy of non-intervention by paying lip-service to the heroism of the Communists, and followed this up by an attack on the leaders of the Negrin Government and the Communist Party who had been forced to leave the country to avoid being shot by Casado's military Junta?

Every sincere anti-fascist understands that the leaders who left Spain in order to avoid being shot acted in the present and future interests of the Spanish people whom they will yet lead again. Would the Spanish people be weaker or stronger to-day, if Negrin, Pasionaria, Del Vayo, Modesto and Lister had already been shot? Was not Marx right when he sought sanctuary from persecution in other countries, instead of indulging in false heroics?

When the Kerensky Government issued the order for the arrest of Lenin in order to shoot him in July, 1917, was not Lenin right in escaping to Finland?

If Lenin had not left the country in order to carry on the struggle in other ways, he would not have been able to lead the working class of Russia to victory in November, 1917, and to lay the secure basis for the Soviet Union of to-day, in all its dignity and strength, able to say through Stalin at the 18th Congress of its Communist Party: "Those who want to give us one blow had better be prepared to receive two!"

The Communist Party was singled out for such attacks because it was the main force in the People's Front and the Army to organise resistance to fascism, resistance that could have finally brought victory.

It Will Only be a Question of Time

We do not believe the struggle in Spain is over. A people who in the fiery furnace of war have fought against such terrible odds, have achieved such a unity out of so many diverse political tendencies, have fought fascism with such unparalleled daring and courage, is not a people that any fascist force can conquer and keep down permanently.

The Spanish people have seen their homes wiped out; their women and children blown to fragments; thousands of mutilated bodies; mile after weary mile of innocent women and children fleeing from fascist terror and brutality.

These memories can never be obliterated, never assuaged, never forgotten. They will burn like unquenchable fires, and will one day be avenged.

The Spanish rulers thought they had conquered the masses in October, 1934. They thought they had drowned the mass movement in blood and terror, but they had not! The great movement of the people which broke through the barriers of persecution and repression, won victory for the People's Front in the General Election of February, 1936. The movement rose still higher in July, 1936; it will rise again and again, and will yet triumph and avenge the sufferings of these years of martyrdom.

How can we help in Britain?

1. Rouse the wrath of the British people against Chamberlain's treachery to such a degree that it becomes impossible for him to remain in power.

2. Demand and insist upon the withdrawal of the foreign invaders in Spain.

3. Demand with greater energy than we have yet exerted, that there shall be no persecution and reprisals against the Spanish Republican people; support every form of resistance in Spain; demand a free and democratic plebiscite to allow the Spanish people to decide their form of Government.

4. Demand Government facilities for improving the terrible lot of the refugees now in the French concentration camps, and no further repatriation of Spaniards to fascist territory.

5. Demand sanctuary in Britain for refugees from fascist territory and a guarantee of security for all Republican military and Government leaders.

6. Intensify the campaign for food for Spain in order that the Spanish people may understand our determination

to help their resistance to fascism by whatever means are available to them. These foodships should be accompanied by naval convoys to the nearest ports in Central Spain, and the food distributed by an International Control Commission.

7. Above all, we must patiently explain to our fellow-workers and everyone with whom we come in contact where the responsibility lies for the continued advance of fascism, in the first place on the Chamberlain Government, but then also, on the Labour leaders who see bastion after bastion of democracy go down, and yet refuse the unity which alone can save the working class and the people of Britain.

Confidence in the Working Class

Strengthened by developments in Spain, the friends of fascism boast that the advance of fascism is irresistible. This kind of talk finds an echo in the whisperings of those who have never had confidence in the working class—such types as can be found in Transport House, the I.L.P. and amongst the Trotskyists.

How well Lenin knew them! How apt his Letter to the American Workers written in 1918!

"He is no revolutionary who recognises the revolution of the proletariat only under the condition that it proceeds smoothly and easily, that the proletarians of the various countries immediately come into action, that right from the outset there is a guarantee against defeats, that the revolution will advance along the broad free and straight path to victory, that one will not here and there—on the way to victory—have to bear heavy sacrifices, to hold out in a beleaguered fortress and to climb up the narrowest, most inaccessible, winding and dangerous mountain paths. He is no revolutionary—he has not freed himself from the pedantry of the bourgeois intelligentsia—he will in fact again and again slide down into the camp of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie."

Fascism is not all-conquering. It is not all-powerful. It can be driven back and defeated. But the conditions for this are working-class unity and the People's Front.

This is the main political lesson that now needs to be driven home in the most urgent and convincing manner.

Confidence in the People

Those who have no confidence in the strength and determination of the working class to lead the mass of the people forward are using the events in France and Spain—*events for which they bear a very heavy share of responsibility*—as a new argument against the People's Front.

There is one simple test that can be applied to prove that the political conception of the People's Front is sound. From the moment it was established in Spain and France, the whole power of the National Government has been exerted to destroy it. Every spy, fascist agent and Trotskyist is against it. Every careerist and place-seeker in the Labour movement opposes it; and all, consciously or unconsciously, support Chamberlain who leads the opposition to the People's Front.

It is because the People's Front means a great step forward for the masses of the people that it is so feared and hated by Hitler, Mussolini and Chamberlain.

Take the experience of Spain, for example. In 1936, Spain was educationally backward; it was in the grip of clerical reaction; with extremely low standards of living and working conditions and a primitive agriculture. Even in the few months from February to July, 1936, immense political, economic and cultural improvements were made, the memory of which can never be wiped out.

Even in the difficult period of fascist invasion, the People's Front built thousands of new schools, and educated hundreds of thousands. It reorganised agriculture and carried out large-scale irrigation schemes. It established new industries, built up a disciplined, and equipped People's Army, Navy and Air Force, and evoked a unity and discipline which is literally a miracle. A powerful Communist Party developed that can never be crushed or prevented from leading the struggle of the working people.

Now take France. The *Daily Herald* cries: "The People's Front is dead in France," and we reply, "Long live the People's Front."

In February, 1934, the French people were profoundly influenced by the heroic resistance to fascism waged by the Austrian workers, and when the fascists threatened French democracy, the workers replied with the General Strike and a united front agreement between the French Socialist and Communist Parties.

This was rapidly followed by the creation of a united trade union movement, and thus the basis was laid for the bringing in of still wider progressive forces into a broad People's Front movement, which in May, 1936, secured the election of the Blum Government.

The mass movement generated by the People's Front won the immediate application of a substantial part of the programme of social advance—the 40-hour week, holidays with pay, extension of social services.

This soon aroused the hostility of the "200 families" in France and the group of millionaires in Britain represented by Chamberlain. The flight of capital from France was organised, the stability of the French franc was undermined from London. Blum was forced into the policy of non-intervention. Despite all this opposition, the mass of the French people received and have retained substantial gains. Magnificent support has been given to the Spanish Republic, despite the closing of the frontier. If the Negrin Government was able to resist so long it was in no small measure due to the fact that the forces behind the People's Front in France were able to break through the barriers that prevented the Spanish Government from exercising its legal rights. To-day, in spite of all weaknesses, the whole French Labour and democratic movement is stronger than it has ever been. A united General Confederation of Labour with 5,000,000 members, a Communist Party with over 350,000, a Socialist Party with over 200,000 are forces that have to be reckoned with. *They are precisely those forces which, on the basis of the People's Front Movement, have been able to prevent the triumph of Fascism in France.*

The Responsibility for Weaknesses

Because a strike is defeated, because some leaders betray their followers, this does not mean that Trade Unions are

of no service to the working class. It is the same with the United Front, and the People's Front. Because they have weaknesses, because they meet with betrayal and temporary defeat, this does not mean that they are useless.

Rather we can say that unity was not carried far enough. The united movements of France and Spain were not supported by united movements in other countries, especially Britain. Constant appeals have been made by the French General Confederation of Labour to bring about international Trade Union unity and organise joint action for Spain, only to be repeatedly repulsed by the British Trades Union Congress. The French Socialist Party has been continually urged by the British Labour Party to break off relations with the French Communists, because unity in France embarrassed them in their refusal to work with the Communists in Britain.

It was British Labour's god-speed fervour when Chamberlain left for Munich that helped to split the Socialist Party of France.

Let us face facts. Britain under Chamberlain is the weak spot in the world peace front. Britain under Chamberlain is primarily responsible for the fact that to-day France is encircled by fascism and awaits with fear Mussolini's new demands. But it is the British Labour leaders who are primarily responsible for Chamberlain being in power. Their refusal to lead a united opposition against him is only screened by their loud talk about "wanting Socialism," while at the same time they try to weaken the fight against him.

They refuse Communist Party affiliation to the Labour Party, they expel Cripps, who wants a People's Front to defeat Chamberlain, and at the same time they work with Chamberlain in his so-called "National Service" scheme, which is not only meant for war time, but to be used in the next economic crisis when the workers' standards of living will be attacked. Preparations for breaking their resistance is one of the chief aims of "National Service."

The weaknesses in the People's Front movements in France and Spain are largely caused by the British Labour leaders who, by the suppression of democratic discussion,

by expulsions and threats of expulsions and by threatening the withdrawal of the Trade Unions from the Labour Party, have prevented the establishment of a People's Front in Britain.

It is this policy which shames the splendid traditions of our Labour movement and makes it the weakest spot in the international working class front.

We do not need to apologise for the People's Front; we do not need to be on the defensive against those who attack it. There is no justification for doubts, fears and hesitations. We take the offensive; we launch the attack on those who have sabotaged the united fight of the people in Spain and France, on those who refuse to organise the common front against fascism and Chamberlain in this country; on those whose policy weakens the whole anti-fascist movement and is one of the principal reasons for the success of fascist aggression.

Too long has there been a tendency to see only the black side of the picture. Look round on the new developments that are to be observed on every side; the new anti-Nazi movement in Poland, Hungary, Yugo-Slavia, Rumania; the fact that the Spanish workers have not yet spoken their last word by a long way; the rapidly developing economic crisis in Italy and Germany, together with a really impressive growth in the opposition to Hitler, so that every reliable observer coming from Germany and Austria speaks of these facts, and of the anti-fascist activity that is now being carried out in those countries in greater measure than at any time since 1933.

The Chinese people, far from being conquered, have severely undermined the whole economic stability of Japan and are even now preparing to deliver decisive blows against the Japanese militarists.

In America there is a tremendous awakening to the danger to fascism, and serious signs of the abandonment of the former policy of isolation. Roosevelt's speeches continually express a readiness to co-operate in any common front of democratic states to withstand fascist aggression.

In Britain, millions of people hitherto uninterested in politics are now profoundly disturbed and are seeking political guidance. There is great concern in the problem of unemployment and a demand that it shall be fundamentally tackled. The youth have compelled attention to their urgent problems, precisely because they have developed a degree of unity which in some ways has taken on the character of a Young People's Front.

Great rent strikes and tenants' agitations are sweeping the country, in which masses of people with very different political ideas have united against their landlords and now want to know; why not unite against Chamberlain as well?

The support for Cripps and discussion taking place around his Memorandum are also significant of the new political ferment.

Above all, what has been done for Spain and China proves that the basis for the People's Front in Britain does exist. For nearly three years, thousands of Aid Spain and China Committees have done magnificent work. They include Labour, Trade Union, Co-operative, Communist, Liberal, democratic and peace organisations. All the fears about Labour losing its independence by participating in them have proved false. These Committees have a mass basis, and have carried out manifold activities that show what really could be done if official Labour gave the lead in organising similar united activity on the basis of an agreed programme directed against Chamberlain's whole policy and towards the formation of a People's Government.

Above all we should feel strong because of the strength of the Soviet Union. Who can read the calm, confident and analytical report of Comrade Stalin to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, without feeling that there in the Soviet Union the democratic peoples of the world have an impregnable fortress, a country that is truly theirs as well as it is the Soviet people's. Alongside a capitalist world distracted by economic crises, unemployment poverty, the loss of liberties and fear of a new world war, there exists the

Soviet Union where these factors are not only non-existent, but where they are now planning to pass from the first stage of Socialism towards Communism. While strengthening their defensive forces so that if necessary they will give two blows for one, while expressing readiness to fulfill all obligations to those who resist fascist aggression, the Soviet people also go forward to put an end to all weaknesses in industrial and agricultural production, and for the complete fulfilment of the Third Five-Year Plan of Socialist Construction.

It is up to us

Such a contrast between the Socialist and capitalist worlds should at once stimulate a desire to strengthen the Communist Party of Great Britain, which would immediately lead to an all-round increase in the power and influence of the whole working class and progressive movement.

The rapid building up of the Communist Party now becomes a key factor in the situation.

It is absolutely necessary if the struggles of the industrial workers for higher wages, better working conditions and against speed-up are to be successfully organised and carried out; if the Means Test is to be abolished and the unemployed put back to work of social value; if the old people are to be helped in their fight for adequate pensions; if the men and women dependent on agriculture and fishing are to be given concrete help in their struggle to preserve their existence; if the united opposition movement to Chamberlain is to grow in sufficient strength and intensity to sweep him and his Government from power.

Linked up with the question of building the Communist Party is the question of giving real political education, not only to our own members, but to the much wider circles of serious-minded people who are anxious to learn more about the system under which we live and how we should act in face of recent developments. In this connection, the publication of the *Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* gives us unprecedented opportunities for providing such guidance and help.

The heavy blow that democracy has received in Spain and the military occupation of the whole of Czechoslovakia by German troops raises sharply new and serious issues facing the people of Britain.

The way has been cleared for new blows by Italy against France, and Chamberlain is already working to bring about a French surrender. The invasion of Czechoslovakia reveals further preparations for what Hitler in his January speech described as "further surprises."

This is why we address our appeal to all men and women of good will in the Labour and democratic movement of Britain to respond to the terribly urgent needs of the present situation by closing their ranks and forming a powerful People's Front Movement.

Especially do we appeal to the membership of the Labour Party, Trades Unions and Co-operative Party to take action now to make their feelings heard, their demands listened to and accepted. Break through the existing barriers and make common cause with all in Britain who want to defeat Chamberlain as the supreme issue now before the whole Labour and democratic movement.

If this is done, then the Whitsuntide Conference of the Labour Party can mark a real turning point in the political history, not only of the Labour Movement, but of Britain. It can be the means through which Britain comes into line with all who are anxious to make a common resistance to fascism all over the world.

If you are interested in the Communist point of view on home and foreign affairs, read

FOR PEACE AND PLENTY

the report of the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain, price 6d.

and

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A survey of the International situation and a call to all who stand for democracy and peace, by G. DIMITROV, price 2d.

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