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Supplement

**New Documents
of the
Left Wing of the
P.O.U.M.**

Theoretical Organ of
International Contact Commission

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ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO:

INTERNATIONAL NEWS, 1904 Division St., Chicago, Illinois, USA

THE POUM AND ITS LEFT WING

It is an almost terrifying fact that the defeat of the Spanish revolution - the greatest proletarian struggle in the last decade - is passing over the labor movement, including even the majority of the revolutionary groups, with practically no attempt at an evaluation of the lessons of this struggle, no attempt to discover the causes of the defeat, nor to seriously look ahead to a correction of the fatal errors in preparation for the struggles to come.

The official leaderships of the Socialist Party, the POUM and the Anarchists, now for the most part functioning illegally and in exile, are satisfied to repeat the old slogans and positions and to throw the major responsibility on Stalinism. By pointing at the counter-revolutionary course of Stalinism, they hope to hide their own crimes. The rest of the responsibility, if we were to believe these petty bourgeois charlatans, is the fault of the working class: "the workers did not respond!"

But none of these movements can avert the storm that is upon them merely by burying their heads in the ground. Unfortunately, the storm hits also the revolutionary elements, and makes their task a thousand times more difficult.

The problem in Spain is to draw together, out of the disintegration of the whole movement, those revolutionary militants who still retain their courage and fighting spirit, who are ready to assimilate the errors of the past, break with them, and regroup themselves into a new organization with a clear and bold revolutionary program. The problem is to recrystallize a Marxist force.

The Spanish militants are moving forward in this direction, even though with small steps and gropingly. The "Friends of Durrutti," a left Anarchist group, which displayed its revolutionary timbre in the May Days in 1937, has put the knife to the whole Anarchist movement with its merciless criticism of official Anarchism. The material which this group has already issued reveals healthy strides forward toward revolutionary communism. It is one of the few forces on the Spanish scene which has attempted a serious analysis of the revolution and its defeat. The movement will benefit greatly with a clearer general understanding of the events and their lessons, if this auspicious beginning is followed up.

Within the POUM, too, ferment and discontent in the ranks has thrown to the surface left wing forces. In opposition

to the bureaucratic convention of a degenerate leadership, the left wing has laid down a challenge to the whole program, policy and organization of the POUM. We are glad to be able to publish the document signed by Jose Rebull which presents, through the prism of the internal struggle within the POUM, an analysis of the fundamental questions of the revolution. In publishing the document, we wish to add a few words concerning its background and to express our opinion of its positions.

The analyses and material presented in this document, dated May 25th, 1939, are not "new," suddenly discovered issues. They are the result of mature reflections which were first expressed in organized form in the internal bulletins of the POUM in the pre-convention discussion in April and May of 1937. This material was later translated and published in English by the Revolutionary Workers League (in the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, now the MARXIST, October, 1937, Volume 2, No. 13).

A broad, unbridgeable gulf existed between the positions presented in these internal bulletins by the left-wing forces, and the positions and policies of the leadership. But the development of the struggle was cut short by the turn of events after the May Days. Two days before the national Congress set for June 17, 1937 the POUM was declared illegal and driven underground.

Four months later, on October 27, 1937, Jose Rebull presented to the POUM Central Committee in Barcelona, a resolution summarizing the positions of the pre-convention days, and indicating how the developments since had decisively affirmed the correctness of these views. This resolution, traveling by underground and circuitous routes, was six months in reaching the United States. It was published in English in the July 1938 issue of the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, Vol. 3, No. 11.

The present document, although written under entirely different circumstances and coming out of another country in Europe--France, presents essentially the same political positions as the earlier ones. On the fundamental questions of the road to power and the state, the character of the war, the struggle against fascism, the May Days, the rejection of the tail--endist policy of the leadership and the reaffirmation of the line of political and organizational independence of the revolutionary vanguard, the document stands on solid ground and presents clear, positive revolutionary Marxian principles. For a fuller discussion of these and many other positions we refer our readers to the above-named issues of the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL.

Possibly for tactical reasons, in consideration of the circumstances and aim of the present document, the questions of

imperialist intervention and the role of Anglo-French imperialism are not discussed. We are of the opinion that a brief discussion of this point along the lines of the resolution to the Central Committee a year ago, could have strengthened the present document and have furthered the understanding of the POUM militants.

Certain of the errors which found expression in the first two documents are repeated here. Chief among these is the wrong evaluation of the POUM as having been a Marxist force up to the July 1936 insurrection. But the POUM was never Marxist. It had a centrist position from the beginning on revolutionary defeatism. It stood for "critical support" to Stalinism in the Soviet Union, in the event of imperialist attack. It stood for "workers' democracy" as against the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is called the "dictatorship of the party." Later, it revealed what was meant by this "workers' democracy" in its capitulation to the People's Front.

It had a false line on the road to building the party -- a line of organic unity, failure to understand centrism, affiliation to the London Buro. This false line on the road to the party broke the neck of the POUM when the questions of the road to power were raised by the civil war. The POUM tail--ended the CNT-FAI, was unable to lay down an independent working class line, unable to take the leadership, failed to understand the character of the People's Front, capitulated, found it impossible to conduct a correct struggle on the obviously interrelated questions of the road to power, such as establishing the organs of power, determining the relations of the party to these organs, etc. The POUM was centrist from its birth.

This evaluation of the POUM before the insurrection as Marxist is a serious error that can have the gravest consequences should it become part of the position of a new force. It would be a constant source of weakness and capitulation. This question is all the more important because the left wing forces are still within the POUM. Until correct, it will be a stumbling block across the path of their struggle.

A lack of clarity on the question of the Soviet Union (Point 9 in the document), makes it difficult to speak definitely on this matter. The document denounces the counter-revolutionary role of the SOVIET UNION, without speaking of the Stalinist bureaucracy which dominates the warped workers' state. It then criticizes the POUM position for "defense of the USSR." This highly unfortunate manner of merely criticizing the POUM positions, but failing to clearly counterpose a correct position on a problem of such key importance, tends to confuse rather than to clarify. On

this question the earlier documents were much stronger. Thus, the Internal Bulletin of April, 1937, and the resolution by Rebull to the CC in October 1937, both speak of the Soviet Union as a warped workers' state. We quote from the latter resolution: "Toward the USSR we must have a position of 'conditioned defense,' analogous to that which we have toward the present war in Spain. We support the USSR insofar as it is revolutionary, which implies a fierce fight against the Stalinist leadership."

We would add to this, the necessity of building a new revolutionary Marxist party in the Soviet Union.

The left wing elements in the POUM face great opportunities and great tasks. If they can consolidate their ranks politically and organizationally, correct the points referred to above and lay down a bold Marxian program, they will have gone a long way in the consolidation of a Marxian cadre. The convention is a turning point. In preparation for this showdown the rank and file militants must present in a clear formulation the need of the political and organizational separation of the Marxists from the reformists and centrists in the POUM.

We understand the difficulties the comrades are living and working under. We present our support and discussion and criticism frankly, in comradely fashion, greeting with the greatest eagerness and solidarity the efforts to establish a revolutionary Marxian vanguard among the Spanish workers.

OPEN LETTER OF THE LEFT WING TO THE POUM MEMBERS

Comrades:

To anyone who lived in our midst before the revolution, it is undeniable that the POUM played a dynamic role, which embodied the most advanced political position of the Spanish proletariat; which interpreted the great problems of the revolution in accordance with revolutionary Marxism and whose party perspectives as a guiding factor were extending from day to day. Its militants worked tirelessly, animated by one single political thought, animated by one single will. They realized the responsibility resting on them which is incumbent on every revolutionary vanguard. They held absolute faith in the triumph of the working class in the approaching decisive battles, and this faith, transferred to the laboring centers, permitted them, despite the most bitter opposition, to win over powerful trade unions, to put an end to the almost exclusive domination of the anarcho--syndicalists over the Catalan workers, and finally to create the Alianza Obrera--which totally rejected Stalinism--organ of the revolutionary labor front of the glorious Asturian insurrection, clearly indicating the route to be followed for the conquest of political power for the working class.

The reason for this uninterrupted upsurge is sufficiently explained by this fact: The POUM was a political party on the basis of REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM, which remained faithful to its political line.

Since July of 1936, when the revolutionary situation experienced a new favorable condition for its upsurge, the POUM gradually gave up in practice its pursuit of the unconfused line of revolutionary Marxism and fell into the most lamentable opportunism. The facts remain as witnesses, and all the phraseology which has been produced up to now or may be produced in the future will be impotent to conceal this. Besides the catastrophic consequences this policy had for the revolution, so far as the party was concerned it led to confusion in the ranks, and with the passing of time, the replacement of the POLITICAL character of the relations among members by a series of maneuvers rooted in the grossest discrepancies of a personal nature.

The consecration our leaders endeavor to give to their unhappy conduct during the period of the Spanish revolution cannot conceal a more obtuse method: non-political election of the Central Committee of a political party.

FOR WHAT ARE WE VOTING?

Democratic centralism---by which our organization is inspired---is inconceivable without discussion. Election of the C.C. of a Marxist revolutionary party without previous discussion is in itself an absurdity. The criterion which should guide in the election of leaders is not one of a professional character, nor can it be based on personal considerations or discontents. The leaders are elected for their political capacity, their ability in their positions, their loyalty to the principles the party defends.

However, political capacity, ability, loyalty--in short the revolutionary conduct of the leaders, is not measured by their words but by their deeds. The drawing of a balance for the actions carried out by a C. C. during its control is not merely one of the fundamental points of democratic centralism but it is an indispensable condition for the life of the party: WITHOUT DISCUSSION THERE IS NO PARTY.

If the discussion is avoided or postponed by the same C. C. which must render its accounts---as in the present case---this fact in itself is enough to disqualify it by its slovenly conception of its duties toward the party and toward the international proletariat. An even greater disgrace is this: that we are not merely concerned with a disgraceful conception of good faith, but with an ugly maneuver motivated by elements interested in avoiding a discussion of their responsibilities.

History presented this C. C. with a privileged role; among all the proletarian organizations in Spain, the POUM alone clearly pointed out, up until July of 1936, the road for proletarian victory, defending the Alianza Obrera as the first phase in the organization of the workers' front, then of the insurrection, and finally as an organ of power, as distinguished from and in opposition to the bourgeois conglomeration of the people's front, and against the fascist peril. This fact involved in itself the future of the working class of Spain. No other party or organization shared the advantageous conditions which this policy offered the POUM for assuming the leadership of the revolutionary war in our country by means of an intransigent, bold, energetic and clear policy. No militant doubted that the POUM would pursue this road, and when the fascist revolt inaugurated the period of the decisive struggles, the credit of the POUM was unquestionable. Thousands of workers and peasants turned on the axis of our slogans and grouped themselves into our trade unions.

However, how was this credit spent? What happened to our proverbial intransigence of principles? Why were those same

principles trampled underfoot? Why were our program of the democratic-socialist revolution and our action subjected to other organizations? Why were our revolutionary positions, political and syndical, which we conquered at the price of enormous sacrifices, abandoned without a struggle? Why did events continually surprise us, almost always unexpectedly, in the principal stages of the revolution? Finally, of what sort were the reasons and the men who led our party into open bankruptcy?

The wreckers of the party who hold seats in the present C. C. kept arguing that the POUM was still young and not large enough to play the role of the revolutionary vanguard, or else they concealed their incapacity in action with the theory of the "spontaneity of the masses."

What is signified by the youth or maturity of a revolutionary Marxist party is not the length of time it has lived nor the number of its members, but the political content of its program, the degree of capacity of its leading cadres in the interpretation of the revolutionary process, and in its rapidity of maneuver for leading the class to victory. Hence, to recognize that the party was still young is equivalent to recognizing in advance the inability to lead it; and the continuance of such defeatists in the leadership without recognizing the sum and the magnitude of the errors committed is to condemn the party to vegetate in mediocrity. The three great classic revolutions, the English, the French, and the Russian, are three brilliant examples of the triumph of a class led by an intelligent and capable minority, functioning as the revolutionary vanguard.

On the other hand, if we are absolutely to confine ourselves to the spontaneous action of the masses, what role has the party to play? Perhaps the mere recording mechanism of deeds carried out under our leadership would win people over to the POUM. "A Marxist cannot believe in a continual, spontaneous capacity of the masses. The masses absolutely need a guiding revolutionary party gifted with the correct Marxist policy." (MA: The New Era)

Hence, if there exist such divergent criteria in the POUM regarding such fundamental points, what is the criterion for voting?

If the militants are those called upon to sanction or to disapprove a political conduct with their votes, what are they to condemn? What are they to adopt?

If the C. C. is to be the highest representative of a "correct Marxist policy" elaborated by the party, why is previous discussion excluded?

If we are to select forty comrades blindly, without knowing what they think of the past, present and future of the party, without knowing their agreement or disagreement with the policies followed, without knowing whether they persist in their errors or are correcting them, what are we voting for?

The present C. C. is excused from answering all these fundamental questions of ours and intends, unless concerted action from below prevents it, to sweep away the nightmare of its rotten past by means of voting, since all political considerations have been excluded; thus it hopes for renewed confidence without having previously rendered its accounts.

GOING OUT ONE DOOR AND ENTERING THE OTHER

Immediately after the insurrection of October, 1934, our party offered the working class of Spain and of the entire world a masterly resume of the lessons of that movement.

The revolution and the war we have just finished living through constitute a tremendously grievous experience, more important for the world proletariat than the insurrection of 1934. The prestige of the POUM, and as much as its prestige, its right to exist as a party, have for a long time demanded open discussion and correction of the errors committed. Without this it is impossible for sympathetic organizations to believe in the sincerity of our future actions; without this it is impossible for our militants to develop, wherever they may be, any action fruitful for the party and for the cause the party defends.

At the last enlarged Plenum of the C. C. valuable time was devoted to questions of a personal type. We who had the opportunity of attending defended the banner of political correctness and of the congress. The C. C. had to recognize its disloyal position towards the principles of the party and accepted the following correction to the political resolution voted upon: "The POUM recognizes that it committed errors. Far from concealing them, it proposes, on the contrary, to recognize them publicly when it draws the general balance of the lessons of the Revolution in conformance with the duties of the most severe Marxist self-criticism, an indispensable condition for the formation of its militants and the rebuilding of its prestige in the face of international proletarian opinion."

But when does it draw the general balance of the lessons of the revolution? When is the Congress of the POUM? Perhaps the leaders of the party are endowed with the right to draw this balance themselves? Do there exist for them no militants of the rank and file who struggled as much as they---and probably more than they---until the last moment? Did they perhaps, because of their

struggle against Stalinism unconsciously assimilate its practice of forming itself into judge and accused at the same time? Finally, when is the completion of the "duties of the most severe Marxist self-criticism" to take place? To this the C. C. replies, with the determination to hold the election first and then strike the general ballots, that is, the congress. Far from admitting in

practice that they must submit the balance of their actions to the rank and file of the party for the latter to say the last word, this C. C. has abrogated to itself the right to classify arbitrarily---that is, by its own absolute and personal criteria---for the militants in emigration in preferential categories, with no attempt to examine any of its components, the standards for a political criterion, instead of a personal one they now adopt, since they consider the former in the category of undesirables.

Now we see into what the political seriousness of our leaders resolves itself when faced with the "formation of the militants of the POUM and the restoration of its prestige before international proletarian opinion." This is especially important because there do not now exist obstacles to hinder discussion; because with the scattering of the comrades which will inevitably follow on the present concentration in the same country and almost in the same city, full political discussion will be much more difficult than it is now---all this leads to the conclusion that the proposed plan of going out one door and coming in another, "washed of sins and crimes," is aimed directly against the base of the party to stifle the voices of protest and definitely extinguish all hope of the congress. Absolutely nothing can justify the necessity of postponing the discussion. The Bolshevik party in Lenin's times--with which our leaders deal so often to season their rubbish--did not fail to hold its periodic congresses, and it even shortened the intervals between one congress and the next in periods when it was struggling against difficulties even greater in practice than those of the POUM at present.

For the comical electoral session which claims to be representative, candidates are not lacking. Nor, unfortunately, are electors lacking. Some invoke the name of the old Workers and Peasants bloc---whose revolutionary principles collapsed among the first--to attempt to raise a smoke screen which will conceal their own positions during the revolution, and which are precisely what must be discussed. Their entire political (?) program consists in raising a series of petty personal questions against other comrades, fully as Trotskyite maneuverers in the heart of the POUM. "Remove the Trotskyites from the leadership of the POUM" is their general slogan, exactly in the way the stalinists proceed against those who refuse to agree to their steam-roller. Meanwhile the leaders of the right faction who sneaked into the principal posts of the party apparatus, the elements who, during the entire revo-

lution in Spain, defending within the party the positions of the popular front of the stalinists, which persecuted, assassinated and imprisoned so many of our comrades, these elements are now at the top of the POUM leadership. This has produced a reaction of repugnance in international workers' circles, among whom these leaders of our party are more "popular" than they themselves can imagine.

Other courtiers of nominations play up their leftism; however, their courting will not succeed in making us forget that they were part of this C. C. which voted unanimously for all the decisive resolutions during the decisive hours of the revolution, in practice denying, as well as others, the Marxist-Leninist principles on the state and revolution. In the action of the May Days it is still impossible to make any distinction between those who want to save the party by resurrecting souvenirs and those who claim to wash their hands of all responsibility, thanks to positions adopted after the decisive phase of the revolution, i. e., accepted by them when the revolution was already unchained.

We have greeted these positions whenever they indicated to us a desire to rectify things--tacit rectification of course---but scattered about through the proletarian world, there are too many conclusive witnesses written by the present C. C. unanimously on the fundamental questions, for today's leftism to be able to wipe out yesterday's opportunism without undergoing sincere rectification.

Our agreement with these comrades at the last meeting of the C. C., to which we were invited, against the faction of the right, enabled us to issue the statement that we sincerely hoped their development toward complete political rectification would be achieved with the speed necessary to allow us to join efforts in view of the discussions the party base must begin--the first point obviously being immediate rectification of their complicity in the farcical election of an apolitical C. C.

THE LEADERSHIP AND THE BASE

The bond which unites the leadership and the base of a Marxian revolutionary party is the political content of the party. When the party loses its political content, the reason for existence disappears, and the leadership is no longer anything but a bureaucratic organ with no representation. This is what has occurred, in the POUM.

The leadership might save its prestige in emigration---recovered in part as a result of stalinist persecution and the growing actions against the party - on condition of immediate pub-

lication of an analysis of the Spanish revolution with the corrections the POUM has the duty of undertaking. This step would have avoided affairs going to the extreme where international workers' organizations have raised a doubt of the political and revolutionary courage of our party; moreover, this insincerity of the C. C. offers a splendid target at which the shufflers of Trotskyite formulas can aim. But our leaders, driven into emigration with the halo of stalinist persecution, did not try to understand that this was insufficient to maintain the revolutionary scope of the party; and systematically, both lefts and rights postponed the discussion of the great lessons of the revolution. Herein lies, to a great extent, the reason for which we can see the withdrawal of political sympathy and material aid by the international organizations, so needed for the comrades who are suffering penalties in the concentration camps. The leadership put itself in the position of receiving without offering anything in exchange, whereas this is precisely the time to give out to the whole world those facts the revolution taught us with our blood. Starting from a false premise, all future positions will give the same impression of confusion. The truth is that today the leadership represents no force either inside or outside the party. It is no more than a bureaucratic organism with morbid outgrowths.

Hence it devolves on the party base to deliver the sword stroke against this Gordian knot which threatens to paralyze the whole body of the party. The militants in emigration are faced with this dilemma of decisively smashing this maneuver of an election without preceding discussion, which is anti-Marxian, and a fascist-stalinist procedure, or of disappearing as a party. No proletarian organization will trouble itself to believe that there exists a group of men more or less numerous, bound together by relationships of a personal or family sort, simply because they bear the initials POUM. We can only obtain the political respect and consideration of such organizations by the courage with which we can defend our political positions. And our political positions are inextricably bound up with the Spanish revolution. Even the positions we adopt in emigration with regard to the future will be worthless except insofar as we draw them from experiences undergone.

To oppose ourselves to these maneuvers we must exhibit great resolution. At the very apex of the front against the development of these maneuvers, we must indicate an immediate progressive step: The congress.

In order that the congress may not suffer a bureaucratic development, in order that, on the contrary, it may be a living thing incarnating the thoughts of the militants, it is necessary to bring to the general discussion the viewpoints of each one,

which we regard as indispensable for the elaboration of a correct Marxist policy. In this sense, and not in that of coercing the free and ample discussion of the militants, we are including in this letter an extract from our viewpoint defended ever since the beginning of the revolution, and which is, unhappily for all of us now, a point of correction of the policy imposed on our party by the leaders (1).

NECESSARY CORRECTION

The fundamental questions which the party must submit to revision are, in our opinion, the following:

1) The question of power and the state. The leadership of the POUM, faced with a situation of dual power advantageous to the working class (July-September, 1936) submitted without resistance to the destruction of the power of the working class, dissolution of the Committees -- in order to collaborate with the bourgeoisie and reformism within the capitalist state apparatus. The leadership could not understand that within the framework of the bourgeois institutions there can be nothing but bourgeois solutions. The leadership implied to the local nuclei of the party which even then considered this policy as catastrophic--namely the dissolution of the Committees and yielding of power to the Ayuntamientos which the revolution had eliminated, instead of undertaking a campaign to democratize the embryonic organisms of dual power, concentrating that power and aiming for the destruction of the capitalist state in order to replace it with a form of the proletarian dictatorship flowing from the very organs created by the revolution. The leadership states that a coalition government with the bourgeoisie and reformists, in which the latter groups constituted the majority, was the "Government of the Revolution." (See LA BATALLA, editorial proclaiming collaboration.) The leadership lied to the working class when it affirmed that the capitalist state was forever dead and that the mere fact of being armed workers indicated the dictatorship of the proletariat (LA BATALLA, speech at the Principal Palace, August 1936). The leadership effectively contributed to the ideological disarming of the working class when it uttered the theory that the seizure of power was possible without armed insurrection (among other works, see the article in JUILLET summarizing this theory.) Finally the leadership contributed to the confusion of the masses by not establishing right at the beginning the fundamental differences between the party's policy and that of the Popular Front, arriving in this way

(1) The documents of our positions have been published in the Internal Bulletin of the Local Committee in Barcelona, partially reproduced by the Paris Marxian review L'INTERNATIONALE, and in English by the RWL US.

at governmental collaboration.

2) Revolutionary war. The leadership did not understand the true meaning of its slogan, "War at the front, revolution at the rear." While it wandered around this fundamental problem, while it defended the need for supporting the revolution at the rear, while it put forward, when forced to be events, the successive slogans of Red Army, Regular Revolutionary Army, etc., on the other hand it aided, by means of its compromises in the "revolutionary government," in checking the revolutionary aspirations of the proletariat; it renounced socialist measures in economy; it legalized with its representative's signature the command and organization of an army of bourgeois character--in effect it paved the road for the return of bourgeois domination. By thus establishing a deep contradiction between its words and its deeds, the leadership of the POUM indulged in sheer demagogy, and, like the other organizations, sacrificed the "revolution" to the alleged interests of the "war" instead of clearly showing that, with regard to the working class, only a revolutionary war merited the sacrifice of workers' lives, i.e., that victory in the war was tied up with the central problem of power.

3) Even after being driven from the "Government of the Revolution," the leadership did nothing to lay the basis for a new power in view of the coming political battles, even in those centers where the party predominated. On the contrary, it permitted the leaders of the Lenin Division to sabotage all political action of the militants, thus aiding the plans of the counter-revolution instead of waging a campaign for proletarian democracy in the mass organizations.

4) From the first the leadership overestimated the political and constructive value of anarcho--syndicalism, which resulted in subordination of its acts and policies to the reformist leaders of the CNT, by this act renouncing the task of fraternal but profound criticism of the successive false positions of this organization, which would have tended to place the most conscious elements under the influence of the POUM. The leadership, dazzled by the numerical factor, ended by abandoning all possibilities for an independent policy, by asserting that the fate of the revolution was intimately bound up with the orientation anarchism would take. Thus our party gradually ended by losing its political individuality in order to become merely a tail to the CNT, which was condemned in advance to collapse because of its lack of revolutionary theory.

5) In the economic sphere, they omitted all propaganda or action bearing on socialization of the soil, the bank, the communications, the mines and the great production centers, as well as municipalization of the public services. On the other hand,

they quietly accepted the typical trade union capitalism, the anarchist realization of the narrowest economic concepts. Similarly they quietly ignored the violence carried out by anarchism in indiscriminate collectivization of the little traders and little industries of no importance in the general sphere of production, and the little individual properties of the peasantry, a violence which created a numerous legion of enemies of the revolution without solving one vital problem.

6) Capitulation of our positions was not confined to the trade union sphere. The fear of numbers and the loss of confidence in our forces were such that with the federation slogan "CNT of UGT," with the agreement of the leadership the unification center FOUS was dissolved, though it considerably exceeded the two other centers in the province of Catalonia excepting for the city of Barcelona, which gave the anarchists the hegemony.

The POUM should have maintained its slogan "a single trade union center," and made it a banner for struggle against the permanent division into two centers, defended by the anarchists, even in the probable case where our trade unions would have been momentarily deserted. If the leadership had carried out a revolutionary line on the political domain, sooner or later the mass-influence of our position would have grown, and the trade union unity center would have grown into a fortress of the revolution. Evidently, the capitulations on a political plane implied the weakening of the party. The FOUS could have been defended only by adopting the Marxist-Leninist positions on political power and the state.

7) The success of the Catalonian working class over Fascism, along with the creation of their own organs of action and of power -- Revolutionary Committees and Central Committee of the Militia -- represented the momentary existence of a third force on Spanish territory. The Republican government at Madrid and the Fascist junta at Burgos were the two others, since the Catalonian Generalidad remained neutralized - but not crushed - by the proletarian power. In this situation it was a question of either recognizing the Republican Government (reformist solution) and in this case dissolution of the revolutionary committees was only a question of time, or of rejecting the authority of that government (revolutionary solution) and in this case the practical problem was posed of simultaneous struggle against the central state and against fascism. Against a bourgeois centralized state, separatism of the revolutionary states is a progressive movement. Revolutionary Catalonia should have put itself at the head of this movement of liberation of the peoples oppressed, by the bourgeois centralist state -- the state whose president was the man of Casas Viejas, who, after having kept the fascist chiefs in commanding

positions in the army and thus paving the way for the insurrection, proceeded to refuse arms to the workers, who had to gain them at the cost of thousands of lives.

"The three simultaneous movements: workers, peasants and nationalists; constitute the invincible strength of the Spanish revolution. The coincidence of these three movements is the sine qua non for the triumph of the revolution." (Revolution and Counter--Revolution in Spain). But the leadership of the POUM thought the masses would win "spontaneously," and thus it excused itself for not giving the basic orientations. The vital problem of the nationalities oppressed by the bourgeois centralized state logically met the same fate as the false positions on the political terrain. The Madrid government, which in reality could not again exercise political control over the masses unless it were backed up by "revolutionary" leaders, was miraculously rescued from the disappearance to which it found itself doomed.

8) The May capitulation. The leadership did not have a clear and independent line. Once the spontaneous movement had started it gave the masses no orientation, no positive program during the struggle. By its silence it covered up the treason of the anarchist leaders. Even now the leadership has drawn from the May movement no conclusions honestly presented to the working class. (2)

9) Instead of unambiguously denouncing from the first moment the counter--revolutionary role of the USSR in Spain and in the entire world, the leadership confined itself to a very moderate criticism of the policy of neutrality adopted by the USSR during the first months of the civil war and ended up by solemnly coming out for the defense of the Soviet Union (Resolution on International Policy, C.C. meeting of mid-December 1936). This zig-zag policy, on the one hand combatting the meddling of the USSR in the Spanish political situation, and on the other hand declaring itself a defender of the intruding state, had no other result than to increase the political confusion of the POUM in the eyes of the masses and even among its own members.

10) Starting with the May Days of 1937 the POUM actually remained outside the struggle. Confined to secrecy, with many of its militants imprisoned, persecuted and assassinated by the Stalinist Cheka, party life could only with difficulty come back into public life. However, this does not constitute an obstacle

(2) We fail to enter into detail on this point which requires particular attention. We refer our comrades to the work "The May Days," which appeared in the Bulletin of the Local Committee of Barcelona, on May 29, 1937.

to adopting revolutionary positions regarding the future, especially after an examination of the unfortunate experience undergone. The different managers who succeeded each other on the E.C., based on the decisions of the C. C. -- among which we must put in relief for their confusionism those of the December 1937 Plenum--followed a line so tortuous and so disconcerting that the party has been maintained only by inertia, but certainly not by the political agreement which should exist among its members. The present C.C. is similarly responsible for this period of real political confusion. Its slogan of Anti--Fascist Popular Front, expressed from time to time in absurd mixture with the slogan of revolutionary workers' front, needs to be discussed; its defenders, by not correcting these positions, set themselves on a plane of political irresponsibility with regard to the party.

THE IMMEDIATE DUTY OF THE MILITANTS

Comrades!

Our leaders have failed utterly. They have thrown away the principles of the base of the party. No one dares expose them to us honestly. By adjourning the Congress a number of times they are trying to evade their responsibilities. They want to re-enforce their bureaucratic domination of the base by means of an apolitical election.

Comrades! The leadership is evading discussion.

LET US IMMEDIATELY BEGIN THE DISCUSSION!

The leadership is destroying the party with its personal struggles.

LET US RECONSTRUCT THE PARTY ON A CORRECT POLITICAL BASIS!

The leadership scoffs at its duties toward the militants.

LET US DEMAND OUR RIGHTS!

The leadership hypocritically hides its mistakes from the international proletariat.

LET US REGAIN THE RESPECT OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT WITH OUR REVOLUTIONARY SINCERITY!

The leadership has put an end to international solidarity with our party.

LET US CONSTITUTE OURSELVES THE CREATORS OF THAT SOLIDARITY!

The leadership has embarked on an antirevolutionary road.

LET US ADOPT A REVOLUTIONARY POSITION!

The leadership plans a coup d'etat within the party.

LET US PROTECT OURSELVES WITH THE DEFENDING CONGRESS!

Comrades!

For the reconstruction of the party on correct political lines
 For the winning of our rights as militants
 For revolutionary honesty
 For a merited international solidarity
 For a revolutionary attitude
 IMMEDIATE OPENING OF THE PRE-CONGRESS DISCUSSION!
 IMMEDIATE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEES FOR DEFENSE
 OF THE CONGRESS!

Long live the POUM!

Long live revolutionary Marxism!

J. Rebull

Meaux, May 25, 1939

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POUM LEFT WING

Word has just been received in a letter dated August 24th that the fight in the POUM between the opportunist leadership and the Left Wing has reached a new high stage. Two of the left wingers elected to the Central Committee have refused to take their seats because of the way the election was handled by the top. In addition to the Left Wing that the R.W.L. comrades worked with while in Spain, there is the so-called Andrade "left" which presents a centrist position; and a few comrades from the official Trotsky group who are still boring from within; a group that split from Trotsky on the basis of the second French turn (entry into the Pivert group) also carries on activity within the POUM.

The rapidly maturing split will now be cut short due to the outbreak of the second imperialist war. The illegalization of the POUM two days before its convention in June, 1937 prevented the split at that time. Now the tempo is again altered.

A Left Wing group of the POUM writes that it desires at this stage to collaborate in publishing material in the INTERNATIONAL NEWS, to enable discussion and clarification. We propose such steps toward the unification of the Marxists into the International Contact Commission.

Material of the Left Wing comrades of the POUM will be published from time to time.

Provisional
International Contact Commission
for the New Communist (4th) International.

Central Committee of the Red Front of
Greater Germany.

Leninist League, Scotland.

Revolutionary Workers League, U.S.A.

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