

THE MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY OF THE USA

Silent stagnation or rank-and-file discussion

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At the ninth international youth camp in Managua, a controversy broke out over our Party. (See the September 1, 1986 issue of *The Workers Advocate*.) Delegation leaders from certain countries wanted to expel our Party from the international movement for discussing, in our press, the errors of the Party of Labor of Albania and the problems and controversies in the current international Marxist-Leninist movement. Some of these leaders claimed to agree with our Party on various issues but condemned us for saying these things in public. Others disagreed with our stands. But in both cases they denounced our Party and put pressure on the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua for its vigorous fraternal relations with us.

This raises an important issue. How should differences be handled? Do the rank-and-file communists and revolutionary activists around the world have the right to take part in deciding the controversial issues? Or should everything be decided by a handful of leaders, after which the communists should be put under discipline to defend these decisions?

The Theory of the Silent Polemic

The leadership of the Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist) is among those who have condemned our Party.

At one time, these comrades held that differences existed in the world movement, that they couldn't be shuffled aside, and that they were serious. They even talked about the need for the "Leninist tradition of polemic" to deal with these questions. But the polemic they called for was an "internal polemic," a secret polemic, a polemic that the rank and file never hears -- in fact, a polemic that no one has ever heard.

This idea was put forward by party leader Raul Marco and endorsed by the CPS(ML) leadership in an expanded Central Committee plenum in 1982. Comrade Marco's speech on this question at this meeting was published by the CPS(ML) as a pamphlet.

In this speech Comrade Marco first talked eloquently about the need for the discussion of errors and right opportunism:

"We see cases of clear deviation from principles, of clear positions of right opportunism and chauvinism that lead, if they are not rectified, to the swamp of revisionism. But what are we to do? Be silent because of the 'independence' of each party and leave it to continue the process of degeneration? No.... We say and we will say clearly what we think, without ridiculous fears about polemics making us fall silent. Because this polemic serves to clarify ideas and concepts, to correct errors if they aren't stubborn,... For this we cannot fall silent as this would be, besides cowardice, scorn for the peoples and the toilers of the countries in question and, as well, breaking with the Leninist tradition of polemicizing, of censuring and not giving quarter to those that -- consciously or unconsciously -- have deviated or distorted the laws and principles of Marxism." ("On Some Questions of the International Movement," speech at an expanded plenum of the Central Committee, October 3, 1982. Translation by *The Workers' Advocate* staff.)

What more need be said?

But Comrade Marco immediately goes on to say that the polemic should be silent. He states: "We are of the opinion, that while there exists a possibility to correct the mistaken ones, and for this it is necessary that they be honorable, the polemic should develop at the internal level and not publicly." (*Ibid.*)

A secret and silent polemic is a contradiction in terms.

In fact, since then, the CPS(ML) has not spoken openly about its views on the controversial questions in the world Marxist-Leninist movement. And it has not spoken either about elements it thinks are incorrigible or elements who could be corrected. It has maintained the silent polemic.

Leninism on the Need for Principled Discussion Before the Rank and File

Furthermore the theory of the "silent polemic" violates Leninism. Leninism does not stand for blind, bourgeois, mechanical discipline, but for conscious, communist discipline in building revolutionary organizations. Again and again Lenin dealt with the controversial questions of the communist movement in front of the rank-and-file communists. For example, when he denounced economism, he didn't keep this internal, but wrote his famous book *What Is To Be Done?*

Lenin, in 1906, in the midst of the struggle against the Menshevik rightists, wrote as follows:

"We have more than once enunciated our theoretical views on the importance of discipline and on how this concept is to be understood in the party of the working class. We defined it as: **unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism.** Only such discipline is worthy of the democratic party of the advanced class.... Organization means unity of action, unity of practical operations. But every action is valuable, of course, only because and insofar as it serves to push things

forward and not backward, insofar as it serves to unite the proletariat ideologically, to elevate, and not degrade, corrupt or weaken it. Organization not based on principle is meaningless, and in practice converts the workers into a miserable appendage of the bourgeoisie in power." ("Party Discipline and the Fight Against the Pro-Cadet Social-Democrats," *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, pp. 320-1)

Lenin's words ring true today. He was by no means exaggerating when he pointed out that silence on the major issues facing the movement, that failure to mobilize the workers into deciding the major questions of the movement, leads to subservience to the bourgeoisie in power. Have we not seen that the rightist and liquidationist currents in the communist movement have led so far that, for example, the Communist Party of Brazil has ended up in support of the bourgeois government of Samey?

Stalin on Differences Within the Communist Movement

For years Stalin followed Lenin on these questions. He identified the lack of discussion of the burning issues as one of the reasons why revolutionary parties degenerate. For example, in December 1926 he gave a report to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in which he stated:

"How do the Social-Democratic parties of the West exist and develop nowadays? Have they inner-party contradictions, disagreements based on principle? Of course, they have. Do they disclose these contradictions and try to overcome them honestly and openly in sight of the mass of the party membership? No, of course not.... This is one of the reasons for the decline of West-European Social-Democracy, which was once revolutionary, and is now reformist." ("Once More on the Social-Democratic Deviation in Our Party," at the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI, *Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 4-5)

Later Stalin changed his mind on this and other principles of Leninism, and he helped foster the backward turn in the line of the

international communist movement of the mid-930's. At the same time, the discussion of controversial questions in the communist movement more and more died out.

What was the result? Such a change helped degenerate the communist movement, just as Stalin said it had done to the social-democratic movement. The damage done to the movement became obvious and open as Khrushchovite revisionism took over in the Soviet Union and in much of the world movement.

The Sad Results of Silence

What has been the result today of the method of silence, the method of forbidding the communists to discuss the vexed questions of the international movement, of the practice of slurring over principled controversies?

At the time when the struggle against the "three worlds" theory was at its height, many questions facing the world communist movement came out into the open. It was not the "internal polemic" against Chinese revisionism, but the public discussion of this issue before the entire world that aroused the enthusiasm of the Marxist-Leninist activists.

But by the 8th Congress of the PLA in 1981 a different situation existed. Among other things, it was apparent that the PLA was floundering with respect to the issues facing the world Marxist-Leninist movement. But no open discussion was held in the world movement of this or other problems. Certain party leaderships claimed they knew the problem with the PLA, but put heavy pressure on others not to deal with it. From then till now, these leaders have not only denied in public what they said in private, but they have exalted the PLA to the sky. They went against Lenin's teachings that "...the proletariat needs truth, and there is nothing more harmful to its cause than plausible, respectable, petty-bourgeois lies." ("The Tasks of the Third International/Ramsay MacDonald on the Third International," *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 501)

This silence on burning issues has been the dominant practice among much of the world movement for too many years. And the result has been repeated fiasco. The rightist and liquidationist errors have been allowed to grow, unopposed, until they corrupted entire parties in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Brazil, etc. And, in essence, the same tactics that led these parties down the garden path are now being trumpeted as the acme of wisdom.

The CPS(ML) itself has been harmed by its silence on the burning issues. The CPS(ML) leadership has been taking up increasingly wrong tactical and strategic views, and it is reinforcing these ideas in the name of glorifying the Spanish Civil War tactics of the 1930's.

Return to the Path of Leninism!

But this is only one part of the present situation. There are also Marxist-Leninist parties and organizations that are fighting against the rightist and petty-bourgeois nationalist influences. By this fight, they not only strengthen themselves, but help strengthen the international Marxist-Leninist movement.

Marxist-Leninists! Class conscious workers! The future of the world Marxist-Leninist movement is in your hands! Make sure that your action is careful, well-considered and revolutionary! Revolutionary Leninism is on your side when you insist on intervening in the important controversies of the world movement, when you insist on deciding the issues of principle!

What are its lessons for today?

Revolution and Civil War in Spain

More on the backward turn in the line of the international communist movement at the Seventh Congress of the CI in 1935

It began fifty years ago, on the eve of the Second World War. It was a momentous clash between the working masses and the fascist offensive of international capitalism. This was the Spanish Civil War, in which the proletariat and the other toilers inspired the whole world with their revolutionary heroism.

With this issue, *The Workers' Advocate* joins the debate that has broken out anew this anniversary year over the lessons to be drawn from the events in Spain. In particular, we will outline our assessments of the line pursued by the Communist Party of Spain, and what this showed about the change in the general line of the international communist movement from the time of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935.

Over the last three years our Party has been publishing its studies of the orientation of the Communist International on the problems of the united front. Our aim is to revive and defend Leninist united front tactics in the face of the rightist and liquidationist distortions of the revisionists and other pseudo-"Marxists."

Up to the mid-1930's, the CI fought for a revolutionary line. But at that time, formalized at the Seventh Congress of the CI, a "new tactical orientation" was adopted. It was advertised as a new and better line for facing up to the worldwide offensive of fascism. But in reality it was a negation of the Marxist-Leninist principles on which the CI had been built; a step backwards which weakened the struggle against fascism; a

turn to the right which undermined the communist parties and opened the doors to the later complete betrayal by the modern revisionists.

The leadership of the CI made this turn under the cover of highfalutin demagoguery and double-meaning phrases. That is why it is important to look at how this "new line" was translated into practice. We have pointed out how the turn in line adopted at the Seventh Congress of the CI backed up the policy of the American revisionist Earl Browder which placed the CPUSA at the tail of the Roosevelt administration's liberal-labor coalition. We also published a study of the policy of the French Communist Party, whose "Popular Front" tactics were heralded as a model of the CI's new line for the anti-fascist struggle. As it turned out, the French experience was an example of placing more weight in the hollow promises of a reformist parliamentary combination than in the mass anti-fascist struggle.

On the surface, the "new line" may appear to have been a greater success in Spain. After all, in Spain the workers and peasants rose up in arms against the fascist onslaught, striking hard blows against Franco's fascist plans as well as against the German nazis and Italian fascists who intervened on Franco's behalf. The heroic defense of Madrid and the other Spanish battlefields became symbols of anti-fascist resistance around the world.

The name of the Communist International was inseparable from this struggle. The CP of Spain itself played a critical role. Among the political forces in Spain, it was the party that best understood the burning necessity of the war against the fascists, and it had the greatest level of organization and discipline for carrying out this war. Moreover, the CI organized a powerful worldwide solidarity movement, including the legendary International Brigade volunteers who hurled themselves onto the anti-fascist barricades.

Nonetheless, despite all the heroism and sacrifice of the working masses and the communists, the orientation pursued by the CI and CP

in the Spanish Civil War was fundamentally flawed. If one strips away the clouds of nostalgia surrounding the Spanish events, the only conclusion to be drawn is that, given the heroic and determined struggle of the communists and working masses, they could have accomplished much more if it weren't for the limits of this orientation. Just as in France, the U.S. and the other countries, in Spain also the "new line" of the Seventh Congress of the CI added up to a wrong and harmful policy.

Below we will outline some of the principal failings of the communists' orientation in Spain. But first let us look at the main forces involved in the conflict.

Revolution and Civil War

By the late 20's, the old monarchist Spain was crumbling. Alongside the semi-feudal estates and the vast holdings of the Catholic church, modern capitalism was rapidly gaining ground. Under the blows of the world economic crisis and the upsurge of the workers and peasants, the Primo de Rivera dictatorship was broken and King Alfonso soon fled, giving way to the Second Republic in April, 1931. A coalition of the social-democratic PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain) and the left wing of the bourgeois republican parties formed the new government.

But the new Republic satisfied no one. The hopes of the workers and peasants that the new government would bring them a better life were soon dashed. And, on the other side, the hopes of the ruling classes that the change in government would stem the revolutionary tide also proved illusory; the big capitalists, landlords, generals, and priests cursed the Republic as it proved ineffective in putting down the growing upheaval among the toilers.

The government moved rightward, with the reformist coalition being replaced by a more right-wing republican coalition, and eventually the pro-fascist CEDA was brought aboard the cabinet. The regime resorted to massacres against the revolts of the workers and peasants. In October 1934, the Republic called in General Franco and his foreign legion to

crush the heroic uprising of the Asturias miners. Meanwhile, the big capitalists, landlords, generals and priests plotted for the overthrow of the Republic in order to smash the revolution under a new dictatorship.

The left-wing coalition of the more radical bourgeois republicans and the PSOE was put back together again in 1936. The CP boasts that it was the one who baptized this renewed liberal/social-democratic bloc a "Peoples Front." In the February 1936 elections, promising to free workers who were imprisoned for their part in the Asturias revolt, the Peoples Front defeated the fascist National Front bloc of the Falangists, monarchists, military officers, and the Catholic right wing.

The workers and the peasants pressed ahead with strike waves and land seizures, demanding much more than the mild reforms offered by the new government. At the same time, the generals and the fascists openly prepared for a coup, with the liberal and reformist ministers of the Peoples Front refusing to lift a finger against the plotters.

The expected coup was launched in July by the fascist generals stationed in Spanish Morocco. The republican government was paralyzed: on the one side deserted by the great majority of the armed forces, police, and bureaucracy; and, on the other side, terrified by the working masses who were pouring into the streets, demanding arms to fight the fascists, and taking matters into their own hands. By November, Franco's forces had seized nearly half the territory of the country before the fascists were fought to a standstill on the outskirts of Madrid by the heroic working class militias. For two-and-a-half more years Spain was gripped by a bloody struggle between fascist reaction and the revolution of the working masses.

Subordinating the Revolution to the Bourgeois Republic

To defend the revolutionary movement the fascist coup had to be resisted at all costs. But by no means did this require straight-jacketing the revolution by restricting it to the framework of the bourgeois republic; or spreading illusions about republicanism; or falling silent

about the need to go beyond the bourgeois republic to achieve the emancipation of the working masses and socialism. But that is just what the PCE did.

Defense of the bourgeois parliamentary republic was the north star of the communist policy. The CI and the PCE presented two interrelated 'arguments for this policy. First was the basic axiom of the Seventh Congress that in the face of the threat of fascism the only alternative for the proletariat was to embrace capitalist democracy. And closely connected to this -- reviving a classic dogma of social-democracy -- they theorized that the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Spain was only possible with a protracted period of consolidation of bourgeois democratic rule.

From time to time the PCE leaders would use radical-sounding phrases to cover up its subservience to the bourgeois state by theorizing about creating a "new type of democratic parliamentary republic." But then definition of this "different republic" was no more nor less than the modern capitalist state as idealized and exalted in the fantasies of the petty bourgeois about "pure democracy." (See speech of General Secretary Jose Diaz to the March 5 enlarged plenum of the Central Committee in *The Communist International*, May 1937)

By the time it made its Peoples Front proposal in the winter of 1935-36, the PCE had dropped all its earlier agitation for a workers' and peasants' government or for the proletarian revolution and socialism. In fact, it violently denounced even the slightest hints of such agitation and demanded that the workers declare loyalty to the bourgeois Republic. After all, they argued, anything else may alarm the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the PCE became mired in petty-bourgeois democratic phrasemongering, painting up the parliamentary Republic in wonderful liberation colors as the only system that could bring the Spanish people real happiness and freedom.

This infatuation with bourgeois republicanism had a major bearing on how the anti-fascist war was to be conducted. In the wake of Franco's coup, the disintegration of the regime unleashed a torrent of mass energy. The armed workers replaced the police, judges, etc. In Barcelona and other key centers of the country the workers organizations became the real power, pushing aside the republican institutions. In this situation, the PCE jumped into the breach to rebuild the tattered republican structures for the bourgeoisie. It played a pivotal role in dismantling the workers' militias and the other forms of the revolutionary initiative of the masses. The PCE prided itself as the number one party of republican law and order.

The PCE's policy won the approval of the capitalist liberals and the right-wing PSOE ministers. But this was at the great cost of disorganizing the revolutionary impulse of the toilers.

Far from detracting from the anti-fascist struggle, upholding the perspective of carrying the revolution beyond the bourgeois Republic was essential for rallying the working class to the resistance. The workers were feeling their own power and clamoring for revolutionary change, while their distrust for the capitalist Republic ran deep. Instead of seizing on this positive revolutionary factor, the PCE devoted itself to corralling the workers to bring them back in line behind the bourgeoisie and the republican tricolor.

Harmonizing the Class Struggle in Favor of the Bourgeoisie

Even with the outbreak of Civil War the class struggle continued to forcefully exert itself within the republican zone. Given the war conditions, some of the forms and bounds of the class struggle may have had to be modified, but strengthening the spirit of the class struggle was essential for inspiring the masses to the anti-fascist resistance. The communists should have taken advantage of this revolutionary energy of the workers and poor peasants to organize them to advance their own

class interests and to rally them for struggle against the fascist onslaught. But the PCE did just the opposite.

The PCE attempted to suspend the class struggle until after the victory over Franco and beyond, advocating a permanent alliance with the republican bourgeoisie. In practice this meant subordinating the revolutionary movement of the working class and poor peasants to this alliance with the capitalist liberals.

According to the PCE leadership, the key to victory over Franco was the elimination of all strife among the different classes and political parties of the Peoples Front. The logic of such an attempt at class harmony was that the workers and the poor were supposed to grin and bear it so as to not offend the sensitivities of the liberal capitalist gentlemen. This is how the PCE put the decrepit group of bourgeois republicans in the drivers' seat. Meanwhile the working class and peasantry, who were doing all the fighting and dying, were assigned to obediently carry the load of the antifascist war with the promise that the bourgeois republic would give them a better life *en la manana*.

The PCE worked day and night to repair the breeches in capitalist relations. Among other things, it put its forces at the disposal of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the workers' control movement and the revolutionary upheaval gripping the impoverished farm laborers (braceros). While the communists worked hard to carry out the literacy campaigns and other popular reforms of the Peoples Front government, they drew a line at any reforms that were not acceptable to the bourgeois ministers.

The PCE argued that any other policy would push the republicans into the hands of the fascists. What they failed to take into account is that the fascist rebellion was aimed first and foremost at the suppression of the revolution of the workers and peasants, and the strength of this revolution was the only hope for defeating Franco.

True, on account of various historical, regional and other factors, a section of the bourgeois liberals ended up on the same side of the barricades as the workers. This is not to say that the bourgeois republicans were valiant anti-fascists, as the PCE tried so hard to portray them; from the first shot of the war to the last, these liberal capitalist politicians showed themselves as a disgracefully flabby bunch of cowards and defeatists. Nonetheless, this rupture within the ranks of the exploiting classes called for careful and flexible tactics to allow the working class to take advantage of the situation to strengthen its hand. This may have even required some type of alliance allowing the workers to "march separately but to strike jointly" with these republican bourgeois. But the PCE's tactics were simply tailist, opportunist tactics that strengthened the hand of the liberals at the cost of the demoralization of the workers.

Petty-Bourgeois Nationalism

The PCE spread a petty-bourgeois nationalist appeal to smooth over the class antagonisms within the Republic and to cement the alliance with the capitalist liberals.

The Spanish working people loathed German nazism and Italian fascism and wanted to live free and independent of these imperialist monsters. Agitation against the nazi-fascist intervention was an integral part of mobilizing the masses for the resistance.

However, the PCE's agitation against foreign fascism went to the point of glossing over that it was the Spanish exploiting classes who made up the internal basis of Franco's fascist counterrevolution. The fighting appeal of the communists was for "the unity of all Spaniards" for the national liberation war in defense of "Spanish national independence." The effect of such agitation was to slur over the class nature of the antifascist resistance, and to provide a further rationale for the policy of kow-towing to the liberal bourgeoisie.

In the last chapter of the war, the PCE leadership called for changing the Peoples Front into a "national united front." The content of this change was to welcome into the front those forces on the fascist side of the barricades who sought "Spanish independence" from the Germans and Italians. Among other things, this showed the lengths to which the PCE leadership was willing to go in slurring over the fact that the fascist onslaught, while having the backing of the foreign fascists, sprung from the soil of capitalist and landlord Spain.

(To take this proposed "national united front" at face value, even Franco himself could find a place for himself in it. After all, Franco's careful maneuvering between his Rome and Berlin sponsors, and between the fascist axis and the capitalist "democracies," was to gain neutrality for fascist Spain during the WWII and to avoid a foreign occupation.)

Betrayal of the Oppressed Moroccans

The PCE took pride in the Republic's civilized policy on the national problem because, unlike the fascists, it recognized autonomy and language rights of the Catalans and Basques, nationalities representing the two most modern and developed regions of Spain. **Meanwhile, the PCE carried its petty-bourgeois nationalism to outright social-chauvinism in defending the colonial subjugation of the "uncivilized" Moors of Spanish Morocco.**

In the 1920's, the bloody colonial war to subjugate the insurgent Moroccan tribesmen was more or less a Spanish Viet Nam. The Spanish ruling classes were determined to crush Morocco no matter the cost in lives and hardship, and no matter that Spain was shaken by the popular opposition to this war. Franco's role in the pacification of Morocco was what first endeared him to the ruling classes.

The governments of the Second Republic, including the Peoples Front, pursued the same colonialist policy as the monarchy, with the liberal and social-democratic politicians turning a deaf ear to the cries of the

Moroccans for liberation. This played right into the hands of Franco and the right-wing officers who had succeeded in co-opting some of the Moroccan chiefs. The colonialist stand of the Peoples Front government pushed the Moroccans deeper into Franco's grip as Morocco became the springboard for the fascist coup. Particularly in the early part of the Civil War, some 135,000 Moroccan soldiers played a critical role in the success of the fascist offensives.

In the mid-1920's, when the PCE was still a small party, the communists reportedly were known and respected among the Moroccans because they had taken a militant stand in support of the Moroccan insurgency. However, by the time of the Peoples Front the PCE leadership had shamelessly abandoned this internationalist stand. There was a deafening silence about the Moroccan question. We have looked but have not even found a hint that the PCE made as much as a whisper of protest against the colonialist policy of the Peoples Front.

This was a question of internationalist principles. It was also an immediate and vital question for winning the war against fascism. If the communists had raised a powerful voice in support of Moroccan liberation, they were in a position to gain the attention of the Moroccans, undermining the stability of Franco's rear and possibly fomenting unrest among his most important divisions. But taking the side of the oppressed Moroccans would have offended the liberal and social-democratic ministers, something which the PCE was not about to do. This was a striking example of what it meant for the PCE to place the alliance with the republican bourgeoisie above all other considerations.

The failure to champion the liberation of the Moroccans was one of the greatest tragedies of the anti-fascist war.

From Militant Unity in Action to Liquidationist Merger With Social-Democracy

Events in Spain provided some of the most dramatic examples of militant unity in action between communist workers and workers under

social-democratic influence, such as in the Asturias uprising of October 1934, as well as in the heroic defense of Madrid by the workers' militias. The revolutionary temper of the workers was running high and they were clamoring for united action against the exploiters and fascists.

This situation opened up wide prospects for the communists to apply united front tactics to organize united struggle and, in the process, win the workers away from the opportunist influence of the social-democrats. Besides the struggle against the right-wing PSOE chieftains, there was also the necessity of exposing the demagogic and vacillating nature of the left-phrasemongering wing of the PSOE led by the inveterate opportunist Largo Caballero, as this wing controlled the UGT trade union center and had considerable influence among the revolutionary-minded workers. Successful united front tactics could have gone a long way in organizing the working class for its own aims, mobilizing it as an independent force at the head of the anti-fascist resistance, and in undermining the strength of the social-democratic leaders who stood in the way of this line.

The problem was that by the time of the Peoples Front the PCE leadership also rejected this line. Their appeals to the social-democratic workers began and ended with the call to rally to the Republic. Having lost their class footing, the united front tactics of the PCE were reduced to cynical maneuvers and jockeying among the PSOE chieftains. (One day the PCE leaders would be praising the left-phrasemonger Caballero as the "Spanish Lenin." The next day they would be cursing Caballero and praising the "realism" of Prieto, Negrin or other right-wing PSOE ministers.) The only consistency in the PCE leadership's approach to the social-democrats was their unending search for the best ministerial combination for shoring up the alliance with the bourgeois liberals and stabilizing the Republic.

At the same time, the PCE pursued a line of liquidationist merger with the PSOE, slurring over all ideological and

political distinctions between Marxism-Leninism and social-democracy.

Indeed, the PCE leaders brought this to the brink of the complete fusion of the two parties, as they campaigned hard and long for the creation of the "single party of the proletariat." The proposals for the united party kept up the obligatory phrases about the theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. This, however, was only window dressing to hide that these were straight up liquidationist proposals for the creation of a party stripped of Marxist-Leninist features and with a platform that didn't go beyond unity to defend the Republic and win the war.

Celebrated "successes" of these fusion attempts were the merger of the PSOE and PCE organizations in Catalonia into the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) and the merger of the socialist and communist youth organizations. However, the negotiations for the complete fusion floundered. The obstacles to fusion included the sharp rift inside the PSOE itself, which persisted despite the PCE's wishful sermons about the need to do away with all "divergencies of opinions" in the workers' movement.

How Not to Fight Anarchism in the Working Class Movement

One of the most hotly debated problems of PCE's policy during the Civil War was its struggle against the anarchists. This was a complex and critical question of the success of the revolution given that anarchism in Spain was a truly mass phenomenon, gripping millions of workers and peasants.

In general, the workers affiliated to the anarcho-syndicalist unions of the CNT were revolutionary- minded, harboring bitter hatred for the bourgeoisie. Anarchism also influenced a large section of the braceros (farm laborers) and starving rural poor who were engaged in a profound, albeit very confused, agrarian revolt against the landlords, the church and all the wealthy classes in the countryside.

The Civil War threw the anarchist movement into a crisis. The anarchist center (FAI, Iberian Anarchist Federation) was paralyzed by its dogmas. They failed to fully understand the political significance of the antifascist resistance, and the anarchist hostility to firm organization proved disastrous in battle. Burdened by their "anti-state-ism," when the CNT/FAI became the virtual ruling power in Barcelona and elsewhere they had no idea what to do. In the main, the anarchist leaders ended up trailing in the wake of Caballero and the Republic, complaining and griping all the way but incapable of demonstrating an alternative.

This situation should have opened the door to the massive defection of the militant CNT workers to Marxism-Leninism. The previous experiences of the Communist International had demonstrated that the communists could win over the anarcho-syndicalist workers by appealing to their revolutionary instincts against the exploiters, while exposing the gulf between the radical phrases of anarchism and its petty-bourgeois and conservative essence.

But such a revolutionary appeal went against the grain of the PCE's whole policy. Instead they attacked the anarchists for their radical phrases, and charged them with disrespect for the Republic, for the liberal-reformist cabinet, for the laws and the police -- all of which were anathema to the anarcho-syndicalist workers. Not surprisingly, such political appeals to the CNT masses went over like a lead balloon. While the immense courage in battle of the disciplined communist fighters won prestige for communism among the anarchist rank and file, a revolutionary political approach would have allowed this influence to grow much further and stronger than it did.

Demanding discipline in the rear, the PCE's propaganda decried the anarchist "excesses" in the workers' control movement and the "extremism" of the poor peasants. However, if the communists were to bring discipline to these masses it could only be done by rallying them in revolutionary struggle for their own class interests. But the PCE's

preoccupation with protecting the alliance with the bourgeoisie made this impossible. For instance, instead of entering the workers' control movement to purge it of petty-bourgeois projects and bring fighting discipline to the workers, the PCE sought to ban this movement, and it attempted to do so by government decree from above. Similarly with the upheaval among the rural laborers. Instead of linking up with their movement and using it to better reinforce the urban revolution and anti-fascist war, PCE cursed the movement for its "lawlessness" and violations of private property.

The PCE tried to entice the CNT leaders to commit themselves to the government; but when the CNT leaders resisted or when they failed to control the rank and file, the PCE leadership would cry out for the police suppression of the "anarchist provocateurs." The anarchists' preference for disorganization may very well have made them a special target of fascist infiltration. Nonetheless, the PCE's violent appeal against the "anarchist fifth column of fascism" -- as if the mass anarchist movement in Spain was just a tool of Franco's secret service -- was right-wing sectarianism at its worst. It was a grave blunder that showed just how not to win over the anarcho-syndicalist workers.

This attitude towards the anarchists is closely connected to the PCE's fight against the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification). This was a small group in Barcelona whose leaders included a number of former trotskyists. It appears to have been a left-phrasemongering social-democratic phenomenon which pursued a tailist policy towards the CNT. Whatever the POUM may have represented, the main significance of its clumsy suppression by the PCE and the regime was that this step served a much larger repressive campaign against the anarcho-syndicalist and left social-democratic workers, as well as "uncontrollable" peasants, who resisted the attempts of the Republic to disarm them and to break up their committees.

Along with this the PCE leadership went on a propaganda rampage -- backed up with police measures -- against anything that smacked of the

spirit of the class struggle and socialism or that criticized the Republic or the capitalist liberals. To give voice to such things was alleged to be proof of the counterrevolutionary acts of the "ultra-left," anarchist, and trotskyist agents of the fascist fifth column.

Illusions in the "Democratic" Imperialist Powers

The petty-bourgeois democratic orientation of the PCE also had its reflection in its stand towards international imperialism. The PCE leadership closed its eyes to the real policy followed by the so-called "democratic" imperialist powers.

All the big imperialist powers threw their weight against the toilers' revolution in Spain. Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy carried out a massive and direct intervention, providing Franco with funds, tanks, planes and artillery, nazi pilots and advisors, and tens of thousands of Italian fascist troops. Meanwhile, Britain, France, and the U.S. played the game of the "non-intervention" policy. In practice "non-intervention" meant an iron blockade against the republican forces, while quietly providing Franco support and winking at the German and Italian intervention. This pro-fascist policy was pursued equally by the British Conservatives, by the Roosevelt liberals, and by the Peoples Front government in France. (The French Peoples Front government, led by social-democratic premier Leon Blum, shamelessly took part in this blockade against the Spanish Peoples Front, a government led by their brother republicans and social- democrats.) Of the major countries, only the then-socialist Soviet Union came out openly on the side of the Spanish Republic and gave it support.

It was only natural that the republican forces would try to take the best advantage of any cracks among the imperialist powers to purchase arms and to weaken the imperialist blockade. But such maneuvers required the utmost vigilance. The working masses had to be conscious that the so-called "democratic" states were also imperialist powers who would

never come to the support of the revolution of the Spanish proletariat and oppressed.

But from the beginning to the bitter end, the leadership of the PCE was mired in illusions about the so-called "democratic" imperialist powers. They considered these powers to be part of "international democracy," which sooner or later would see the folly of "non-intervention" and come to "offer deserved and categorical resistance to Germany and Italy, countries which are endangering the interests of France, Great Britain and all the democratic countries of the world." (Jose Diaz, *The Communist International*, May 1937)

In deliberating every major question of policy, the PCE leaders placed great weight on how it would sell in London or Paris. They were very concerned to convince the British, French and other capitalists that there were no revolutionary fires blazing under the Spanish Republic and that their economic and strategic interests in Spain were in good hands. This provided them with yet another argument for such Popular Front policies as propping up the bourgeois liberals and right social-democrats; protecting capitalist property and especially the capital of foreign firms; disarming the militias and reestablishing the republican structures; suppressing the "uncontrollables" and establishing "normalcy" in the rear. While all these policies had their own domestic basis, they were also seen as a means of gaining the "confidence" of the French, British and other imperialists.

The International Brigades also appear to have fallen victim to such "confidence" building. In the fall of 1938 the International Brigades were abruptly withdrawn from Spain, despite the significant role they continued to play at the front. Apparently this was agreed to by the PCE and the CI as a conciliatory gesture to the imperialist "democracies." These were the days of Munich, and in the Munich spirit Chamberlain had just reached a gentlemen's agreement with Mussolini over the division of Spain. Incredibly, the communists seemed to have concluded from this agreement that even more concessions had to be made to

convince Lord Chamberlain to change his ways. As one CI leader wrote at the time: "Thus, developments in Spain depend upon the rapidity with which the British government is compelled...to modify its pro-fascist foreign policy, and to join in combined international action to aid the Spanish Republic." (P. Weiden, "Three Years After the Seventh World Congress," *The Communist International*, August 1938) Indeed, it looks like the withdrawal of the International Brigades was part of a last ditch attempt to compel the "democratic" imperialists to "modify their pro-fascist policy."

The PCE's shameless betrayal of oppressed Morocco also had international ramifications. To take a stand for Moroccan independence would not only have meant going up against the Spanish bourgeoisie, it also would have meant a challenge to the French and British imperialists, who undoubtedly would not have welcomed a liberated Spanish Morocco kindling the liberation movement throughout North Africa.

The Collapse of the Revolution

In the last phases of the war the PCE leadership was boasting of the complete triumph of its policy. Under the "realistic" social-democrat Juan Negrin they had succeeded in "consolidating the machinery of state." The militias were disbanded and the regular army was "establishing itself on a firmer basis from day to day." And the Peoples Front was so solid and strong that it was "rapidly becoming an all national front...on which the strongest fascist beasts of prey will break their teeth." (See "Two and One-Half Years of War for the Independence of Spain," *The Communist International*, January 1939)

The PCE had won the battle for its policy, but the war was already lost. The revolutionary energy and initiative of the masses had been dissipated. Demoralization and fatalism began to grip the workers who had put up such a ferocious resistance to the fascists. Meanwhile, the government was honeycombed with capitulationist ministers and

military officers plotting to stab the communists in the back to reach a deal with Franco. The rotten foundation on which the Peoples Front was built could no longer withstand the blows of the fascist military offensives. In the spring of 1939, the Republic disintegrated. Ministers began deserting their posts and on March 6 a group of republican officers launched a coup directed against the PCE. On March 27 Franco's forces occupied Madrid.

One cannot guarantee that defeat would have been averted with a better policy; the revolution in Spain faced powerful and savage enemies. But what can be said is that a better policy would have gone much further in building on and keeping alive the revolutionary impulse of the masses. A better policy would have backed up the anti-fascist war by building up the independence of the workers and poor peasants, rallying them for their own class interests, and inspiring them with the goal of socialism.

Such a policy would have provided the best hope of victory, and it would have dramatically changed the complexion of the resistance. Even if Franco still had come out on top, a revolutionary policy would have laid a much firmer groundwork for carrying on the resistance after the fascist conquest, avoiding the depths of disorganization and demoralization that gripped the masses.

A Legacy of the Wrong Orientations of the Seventh Congress of the CI

It must be stressed that the wrong policies pursued by the Spanish communists during the Civil War were not the isolated mistakes of a wayward party. From the outset, top leaders of the Communist International were intimately involved in the work of the PCE; and the Peoples Front policies of the PCE were endorsed by the guiding bodies of the CI as a "brilliant confirmation of the new line of the Seventh Congress." Moreover, this policy had the encouragement of the

leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as Soviet diplomacy which played an active role in Spain.

For the world's communists, including thousands of International Brigade volunteers who took a direct part, the Spanish Civil War was a dress rehearsal for the looming anti-fascist battles of the Second World War. Unfortunately, it did not only set an example of courage against fascism. It also trained the communists in a wrong orientation which compromised the gains of the triumph over fascism and undermined the international communist movement. (See "In Defense of Marxism-Leninism: On Problems in the Orientation of the International Communist Movement in the Period from the End of World War II to the Death of Stalin," *The Workers' Advocate* theoretical issue, May 1, 1984)

The tactical model provided by the Spanish Civil War still has its impact to this day. The pro-Soviet revisionists along with other reformist and social-democratic forces continue to make Spain a basic reference point. Their views on the Nicaraguan revolution are but the latest example. According to these voices, the need for a "broad cross-class popular front founded on the basis of defending a bourgeois democratic republic" is one of the "timely lessons" for Nicaragua offered by the legacy of the Spanish war. (*Frontline*, July 21, 1986)

From this standpoint they applaud the Nicaraguan government's petty-bourgeois policy of compromise with the big exploiters, its bureaucratic suppression of the class struggle of the workers and peasants, and its repressive steps against the "ultra-left" revolutionary workers who adhere to the Marxist-Leninist Party of Nicaragua (MAP-ML).

Similar "lessons" are drawn for El Salvador, the Philippines, Chile, South Africa, and even the fight against the Reaganite offensive here in U.S. Wherever the masses are in struggle against reaction, the Spanish legacy is dredged up to justify bowing before the liberal capitalists in the

name of "broad unity," while combating the "greatest danger" posed by the allegedly "ultra-left" ideas about the political independence of the working class, the class struggle, the proletarian revolution and socialism.

More in the form of nostalgic folklore than a scientific summation, the experience of the Spanish Civil War has been passed down as a tactical model. It is about time that the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists made a critical summation, liberating the movement once and for all from the influences of the wrong orientations of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. Indeed, this is a burning task for rebuilding the international communist movement on a solid Marxist-Leninist line.

The Spanish Civil War and problems in the present day movement in Spain

Elsewhere in this issue, *Workers' Advocate* begins a study of the Spanish Civil War.

This inquiry shows that the Spanish Civil War represented a huge revolutionary upheaval marked by great heroism and sacrifice by the communists and revolutionary toilers. Unfortunately, however, the orientation which guided the struggle -- the orientation pursued by the Communist Party of Spain -- was grievously wrong, and this weakened the overall struggle.

The wrong policies of the CP of Spain were not just some isolated, small errors but represented a turning away from Leninism. They were based on the rightist views of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, and they serve as yet another example of the bankruptcy of the change in the CI's line that took place in the mid- 1930's.

The problems seen in the Spanish Civil War and the wrong line adopted by the Seventh Congress of the CI are not just issues for historical study. Rather, they call for a thorough discussion and repudiation since they continue to exercise a negative influence on the present-day revolutionary movements.

For one thing, these ideas are at the core of the line of the Soviet and other revisionist currents today. As well, the influence of these ideas has worked to hamstring the international struggle against modern revisionism during the last several decades. And today, among the forces which stood up against Soviet and Chinese revisionism, one finds parties taking disgraceful, right- opportunist positions, petitions which they often defend invoking the heritage of Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress of the CI.

Such is the case, for example, with the CP of Brazil, whose tailism towards the liberal bourgeoisie has led it to support the Samey government and even to enshrining loyalty to bourgeois democracy in its new party constitution.

One would think that in a country like Spain, where the forces who broke with revisionism have the firsthand opportunity to study the Spanish Civil War, they would seriously take up the task of overcoming the wrong legacies that harmed the courageous and costly struggle of the 1930's. After all, the revisionist and social-democratic forces in Spain ardently defend those legacies. But unfortunately in Spain we find the leadership of the anti-revisionist Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist) attempting to duplicate those wrong policies in the present-day struggle.

In the upcoming *Workers Advocate Supplement* we will discuss the line of the CP of Spain (ML) in the spirit of internationalist concern for the struggle of the Spanish comrades.

This article will explore a number of basic deviations that we are concerned about in the strategy and tactics of the Spanish party. These

include discussion of its orientation for a Republic; its line of "national independence" for Spain and the advocacy of "neutrality" in the anti-war struggle; and the wave of unity-mongering with the "left" social-democrats and revisionists that has been the heart of the CPS(ML)'s tactics over the last couple of years. These problems show that instead of basing itself upon the class struggle and the socialist perspective, the CPS(ML) sidesteps social questions and is prey to the influences of petty-bourgeois nationalist and democratic illusions.