

Workers Age

A PAPER DEFENDING THE INTERESTS OF WORKERS AND FARMERS

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MURDERED BY STALINISM



Andres Nin, Leader of the POUM

TERROR AGAINST POUM REVEALED IN LETTER

(We publish below excerpts from a letter from a leading member of the P.O.U.M. This letter was written, as can be seen, before word of Nin's murder had been received, and, in referring to his transfer from Madrid to Valencia and a fair trial, based on false information then being circulated. It is nevertheless a letter of profound importance in revealing, directly from the arena of the struggle, the persecution of the P.O.U.M. and all revolutionary working-class elements in Spain—EDITOR.)

* * *

Dear Comrades,

I am going to inform you, briefly, of what has happened against the P.O.U.M. In short, it is a matter of a base and low maneuver against the revolution and the proletariat, of which our Party is the symbol. Naturally, it is only the culmination of a process of defamation against us, which in a short time passed over into the realm of action and which, because of its rapidity, made all precautions that we had taken completely inadequate.

During the first days of June, our Comrade Gorkin, as Editor of La Batalla, went to visit a minister of the government, in order to intervene on behalf of the reappearance of our daily, La Batalla, and to take up the case of Comrade Bob Smilley of the I.L.P. who was dying in jail of appendicitis without any medical attention. The Minister, an old comrade of Gorkin during their youth and fighting days in the S.P., told him as a friend, and in all frankness:

The C.P. has presented an intransigent proposal in the Council of Ministers—La Batalla must

not be published; no other P.O.U.M. paper must be substituted for it during its suppression; all P.O.U.M. publications must be suppressed throughout Spain; the P.O.U.M. must be crushed completely and at all costs; all its headquarters must be closed; all its militant cadres and responsible committees must be arrested and a trial is being plotted (Moscow style) against the Executive Committee (broadened, if necessary), accusing them of being spies and saboteurs and of being in the service of Franco, of Mussolini, of Hitler!!!! If the Government would not consent to this, the C.P. would resign from the Government with all ensuing consequences—be what may the military situation of Spain! A base, low and vile proposal that clearly shows the morally political bankruptcy of the Stalinist communists. For this would be no more than criminal coercion, since the C.P., in this, is no more than the mouthpiece of the ex-Communist International.

A few days after this interview, the "fun" began with the arrest of Andres Nin. That same night all the remaining members of the Executive Committee (except two), some with their wives and families, were also arrested; in no time at all (a matter of hours) they jailed the majority of the Local committee, hundreds of our leaders; they confiscated all our headquarters, institutes, sanatoria, medical and clinical institutions, Red Aid, Marxist Editorial, etc. In a word, they tried to behead our movement in fact, right now a thousand of our leaders are in government jails, the most important ones being held incommunicado.

MURDER OF NIN BLOW AT ANTI-FASCIST SPAIN

Statement of I.C.L.L.

THE murder of Andres Nin, leader of the Spanish Revolution, and its party, the P.O.U.M., is a vicious blow struck at the Spanish and international working class, in the campaign of bourgeois-democratic reaction against the adherents of socialism, the working-class fighters against fascism. It is a blow intended to weaken the socialist struggle, to demoralize the revolutionary workers aspiring to overthrow, once and for all, the capitalist system, breeder of bloody fascism—a vile, counter-revolutionary act perpetrated by those who wish to suppress the workers in the name of capitalist democracy, the Stalinists.

The Independent Communist Labor League protests sharply the lynching of its brother party in Spain. It calls upon all working-class organizations and liberals to add their voice, crying out against this murder.

But above all it warns the international labor movement that the murder of Andres Nin is a tragic omen of a new degenerate stage in relationships among the various tendencies in the labor movement. It warns the international proletariat to be vigilant against the new road being taken by Stalinism, a path on which the murder of Nin is but the first step!

Just as previously the Comintern denounced workers who differed with its policies as "social-fascists," so now it denounces all who oppose its class-collaboration policies as "agents of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco." Stalinism is proceeding from the method of abominable slanders and lies against other working-class groups, to the method of physical extermination, internationally as well as in Soviet Russia.

The murder of Andres Nin, the suppression of the P.O.U.M., the wholesale arrest of its

leaders, the growing attacks on the C.N.T.-F.A.I., the new persecutions of the Left Socialists headed by Largo Caballero, these are the very essence of the policy of the People's Front, which seeks to maintain the tottering capitalist system by the suppression of the revolutionary working-class. The bourgeois elements in Spain, the right-wing socialists, and the Stalinists, prate about "democracy" while they erect a reactionary military dictatorship, exclude the voice of the trade unions from the councils of the war against fascism, delay the necessary offensives against Franco, while they devote their energies to assuring Anglo-French imperialism that capitalism will not die in Spain.

The official communists have chosen the road of the front with the bourgeoisie, with the international imperialists, against the front of the working-class, against the real anti-fascist front. They are the spearhead of the drive against the working-class in Spain, just as the German Social-Democracy was in the Revolution of 1918. To prevent the socialist proletariat from coming into power, no blood-letting, no methods of capitalist-police dictatorship, were too excessive for the Scheidemanns and Noskes. They murdered Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht! To preserve unity with the bourgeoisie in the form of the People's Front, to supplement certain false and suicidal aspects of Soviet foreign policy, no method is too severe for the Stalinists. They murdered Andres Nin!

In People's Front Spain "all opinion is permissible," says Azana. The fascists are not excluded according to this latest definition of the People's Front. But the opinion of the

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ICLL SENDS NEW PROTEST CABLE

The following cable of protest was sent to the Negrin Government by the I.C.L.L.:
Premier Negrin
Valencia (Spain)

August 13, 1937.

We supporters Spanish struggle against fascism protest vigorously murder Nin violation government pledge guarantee regular procedure. Demand release imprisoned POUM and other working class leaders fighters against fascism. Demand united workers front.

Independent Communist
Labor League
Jay Lovestone, Secretary

Andres Nin was transferred immediately to Valencia and from there to Madrid—the entire Executive Committee to Valencia also. There were rumors (the Stalinists certainly had every intention of doing so) that our comrades would be summarily tried, without charges being preferred against them, and shot "ipso facto." The National Committee of the C.N.T. intervened, asking that the Government safeguard the lives of Nin and the members of the Executive Committee to prevent a probable political assassination, which was being "mouthed" in an atmosphere of rejoicing by the Stalinists. Until to-

day, the most depressing rumors have been circulating concerning the fate of our leaders; today we are more reassured. The Executive Committee is in the Valencia jail and Comrade Nin, because of the international pressure which has been exerted upon the Government, has been rescued by the Minister of the Interior personally from the private jail of the C.P. in Madrid, and transferred to Valencia by the Government.

A duality of political behavior is being attributed to him, with respect to the affairs of the P.O.U.M. (the great concern of Spain today—what can be the cause of it? our revolutionary position!!!!) by the C.P. and the police, which is now under their control, and by the Government on the other hand. I received news today that the Minister of Justice, Senor Trujillo has sent an official letter, in the name of the Government, to the lawyer who is handling our affairs, telling and assuring us that the leaders of the P.O.U.M. will be tried in a normal and legal manner with all democratic privileges and the right of defense for the accused. This is what we want! From accused we will transform ourselves into accusers!! In this respect, who does not remember the trials of the true bolsheviks by the Czarist judges and jurists, which they utilized as means of revolutionary agitation!

Right after these actions on the part of the police that I have men-

tioned, our movement was paralyzed for a while. With a few days of hard work we succeeded in reorganizing ourselves and the new committees started to function. All our old active comrades were compelled to live away from their homes, because the police tried to track them in their homes. All this created more difficulties in our work. Immediately the first manifestos were issued and last week appeared the first underground issue of La Batalla, which will appear semi-weekly. This will show you that in spite of everything, our party is on the job, that those of our comrades who are not in jail are acting bravely and that our organization is going forward once more. I'm sure that our underground work will show our revolutionary integrity and will be a stimulus to the international revolutionary proletariat.

The anarchists have started to pay dearly for their policy of adaptation. The more advanced sections of the F.A.I. and the Libertarian Youth are feeling the shortage in the ranks of their cadres, due to the fact that their comrades are being jailed daily.

Now we have a problem of a different character here. Comrades who used to work in our offices and in our International sections, wish to proceed to Paris—those are the comrades deported by the Government (others are put in jail) and they come without means. Up till now, I did all I could but now all

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Mexican Group Supports ICO Line, POUM Struggle

The positive forces for international revolutionary reconstruction are growing slowly but surely. The consistent fight for revolutionary principles and methods of organization carried on by the International Communist Opposition for nearly a decade and above all the stirring revolutionary example of the P.O.U.M. in Spain are beginning to bear fruit in widely separated lands. We reprint below the translation of an editorial from the third number of *La Batalla* of Mexico dated July 1, 1937. *La Batalla* is the official organ of the newly formed Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico and its editorial presents evidence that the Mexican working class is at last giving birth to the cadres that will one day give it the leadership of a truly revolutionary Marxist party.

The editorial is entitled, "We Are Revolutionary Marxists," and reads as follows:

* * *

THE Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico has not yet completed six months of life and our paper has reached only its third number. Nevertheless our tendency has already made itself felt. The Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico arose out of the need of starting in our country a movement which would lead to the creation of a Marxist Workers Party, free of the degeneration, the sectarianism, the opportunism, and the anti-sovietism to which, each in its own way, Stalinism and Trotskyism have become subject.

Frequently we are called Trotskyites. Others think we want to form a fifth international. There are many who cannot conceive of the existence of a revolutionary Marxist organization that is neither Trotskyist or Stalinist. The Stalinites call us Trotskyites and the Trotskyites say we are "a species of Stalinites." But we do not want to form a fifth international nor are we Trotskyites nor Stalinites.

The international working-class at present is suffering the consequences of the opportunism of the reformist parties of the Second International, the new opportunism of the parties of the Third International, and the disorientation and false position of the groups of the Fourth International. The reformists have been hardened in their opportunism by their many years of faithful and traditional service to the bourgeoisie. The Stalinites, with their new People's Front policy, have placed themselves in the same position as the reformists. The Trotskyites, like the Stalinites are a reflection of the faction struggle going on in the Soviet Union and their acts obey in the first place the exigencies of Trotsky's struggle against Stalin. Stalinism and Trotskyism are the opposite poles of one and the same thing. When the former swing to the right the Trotskyites swing to the left and when they have been leftists the Trotskyites have gone to the right. Neither of these tendencies bases its acts on a Marxist analysis of the needs of the working-class in each country. They are both incapable of working out a revolutionary line which will meet the varying conditions and needs of struggle of the proletariat.

The defeats to which these three tendencies in the international working-class have brought it, lead to the development of an entire series of groups and parties of a Marxist character independent of these internationals and grouped in the International Communist Opposition (with headquarters in Paris) and in the London Committee for Revolutionary Socialist Unity. Free from all opportunist illusions of the Peoples Front variety, from all anti-sovietism, from all governmental dependence, resting on foundations forged by them, with a complete class inde-

pendence, with a lively internal democracy, without sectarianism of any species and with a great theoretical consistency, all these parties constitute at present the strongest focal points of revolutionary Marxism. The P.O.U.M. in Spain in the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat there; the Brandler party in Germany (the only party which has been able to survive and work actively in complete illegality under the Hitler regime and undermine the bases of the Fascist power), and the party of Lovestone in the United States with its considerable influence on the masses of the C.I.O., are the best demonstration of the correctness of the Marxist position which they hold.

All these parties truly internationalist as they are, do not, however, form an artificial international a la Trotsky or an international of automatons a la Stalin. Their internationalism is not mechanical; it is based on mutual assistance, fraternal criticism and firm, consistent and timely solidarity. They help each other because they really understand each other without the necessity of bureaucratic pressure or pressure of any other kind. They form, in fact, the basis of a genuine international party of the proletariat.

The Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico adheres to their tendency. Its birth came out of the necessity of beginning at last the task for the construction of a proletarian party of Marxist and Leninist orientation, free of all sectarianism, opportunism, and peoples front illusion, of all subsidism* and of all traces of anti-sovietism; the need of an independent, revolutionary party with a life of its own, doing its own thinking, elaborating a revolutionary political line based on analysis of the real conditions and needs of the Mexican proletariat, with a clear conception of true proletarian internationalism in deeds of mutual aid and constructive criticism and not merely in phrases.

We do not hide our position. We do not reject criticism. We accept all the consequences that our convictions may bring us. We know how to accept responsibility for our actions. We have no confidence in the policy of the Peoples Front. We know perfectly well that the government of Cardenas is not a government of the workers and peasants but a bourgeois-democratic government; that elections in our country have not yet ceased to be a farce; and that the National Revolutionary Party is really not a party at all, but a personal instrument of the President of the Republic. Nor do we fail to recognize the fact that the government has control of the peasant movement and to a large extent of the labor movement.

It is for all these reasons that we direct our struggle towards the organization of the peasantry independently of the government, and towards the development of the complete class independence of the trade unions and the complete liberation of the toiling masses from governmental control.

It is necessary to give support to the government of Cardenas against more reactionary elements, but without hiding from the masses its true nature, without ceasing to criticize it and its political apparatus and without ceasing to struggle for the freeing of the masses from governmental control and illusions concerning the gov-

* In Mexico all political movements including the official Communist Party are accustomed to depend on government subsidies in one form or another—editor's note.

working-class, the opinion of revolutionary socialism, which alone can defeat Franco, this opinion is not allowed to be heard in Spain. So far capitalist "democracy" does not extend. Great Britain, the "mother of democracy" and the enslaver of millions in her colonial empire, has been reassured—the People's Front is a zealous advocate of capitalism; the People's Front is an extremely effective weapon in protecting imperialist British investments.

The cabinet of the People's Front government has been able to play its many-sided game with considerable skill. To international imperialism, it can show its work well done: ruthless suppression of the revolutionary proletariat. To international labor, seething with resentment against the Negrin-Stalinist reaction, against the fierce and brutal drive against the non-Comintern sectors of labor, it had the temerity to avow its complete ignorance of any persecutions, and to "pledge" a fair and open trial for Andres Nin, when he was already dead! Such is the despicable role of the bourgeoisie made bold by the political support of the Stalinist clique in the Soviet Union, which support initiated and "guaranteed" the suppression of the Spanish workers.

A mighty international protest of labor and liberals must force the people's front and its supporters to cease its persecution of those sectors of the anti-fascist front which were among the first to take up arms against the fascists, which have poured out their blood in courageous struggle against the fascist gangs. The murders must be stopped!

The persecutions must cease!

The revolutionary workers of the P.O.U.M., C.N.T., and the Left Socialists, imprisoned in the jails of the People's Front must be freed immediately!

The People's Front has run its full course. It has fought against the socialization of industry; it has opposed the freeing of the Moors, which would have smashed Franco at the start;

opposed the nationalization of the land, which would have destroyed the social roots of fascism; opposed the development of a genuine workers' army—steps which would have mobilized the workers and peasants on a vast scale to smash the hordes of fascism. Having posed as the unifying instrument of anti-fascist forces, and the groundbreaker for the social revolution, it has now revealed itself as the open agent of capitalism, as the loyal servant of international imperialism, which demands the suppression of the revolutionary proletariat at all costs.

At all costs! Since the expulsion of the workers' organizations from the bodies directing the war against the fascist beasts, the rumours have gathered in volume that the People's Front government is preparing a compromise with the fascists, a compromise dictated by Anglo-French imperialism, and to which the Stalinist clique in the Soviet Union offers no opposition, thus endangering not merely the Spanish, but the Russian and international proletariat as well!

There are only two roads! Either the road of social revolution and winning the war against Franco, or the road of the People's Front, the road of compromise with Franco, the road of losing the war.

There are only two roads! Either the road towards rule of the working class, or the road back to rule of the capitalist class.

We hail the struggle of the P.O.U.M. and the revolutionary proletariat of Spain for the social revolution to win the war. We call upon the international proletariat to support this struggle, to protest the abrogation of the rights of the revolutionary workers to agitate for their viewpoint, to free those revolutionists still imprisoned.

Long Live the Spanish Revolution!

Long Live the P.O.U.M., its leader!

Long Live International Proletarian Solidarity!

Independent Communist Labor League
Jay Lovestone, Secretary

ABOUT MAKING LABOR UNIONS RESPONSIBLE

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unauthorized strikes, and said they would impose severe punishment upon the members violating the union agreement if the companies on their part will cease and desist from provoking the workers and will set up sufficient machinery for adjustment of grievances and adjudication of disputes. Incorporation would not have helped earlier. It is not needed now.

In the case of the steel industry, over 400,000 workers were brought under union contracts for the first time in the lives of most of them. These contracts were, in most instances, secured peacefully, following a long organizing and educational campaign. There has not been a single report of violation of agreement provisions or wildcat strikes on the part of these steel men. The companies took their obligations seriously and so did the workers. What function would union incorporation perform in this case?

Attack On Sympathy Strikes

Unions should be incorporated and otherwise regulated so that they may not engage in illegal

ernment.

The proletariat of Mexico needs a new revolutionary party free from the defects of reformism, Stalinism and Trotskyism and capable of giving it sound guidance in all its struggles. It needs also a class united front, a front of the workers and peasants, capable of checking the advance of reactionary forces and becoming the vanguard of the national struggle against imperialism. The Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico is at the service of these objectives. We are not, we repeat once more, neither Trotskyist nor Stalinist: we are a revolutionary Marxist group.

strikes, sympathy strikes or jurisdictional strikes.

Incorporation has got nothing to do with all that.

Illegal strikes, whatever that means, are illegal, and incorporated or not, unions are answerable before the law.

If by sympathy strikes are meant strikes of workers in an industry whose functioning is vital to another industry where a strike or a unionization campaign is in progress, why, that is the stuff of which effective unionism is made. Incorporation of unions, unless devised to be especially oppressive to unions, would not prevent sympathy strikes any more than incorporation of business companies forbids them to cooperate with one another in any form that appears advantageous to all concerned.

The trade union movement, if it means business, cannot forswear the one means that holds out the biggest prospect of success: the support of all labor to the unionization movement in a related industry. The limits to which the union movement can go in resorting to "sympathy strikes," which are in reality industry-wide strikes, must be determined solely by judgment of the prospects of success and by the borderlines of assured public sympathy. The responsibility for determining these limits must rest solely with the respective union. Any imposition of regulated limitation by law would tend to cripple the union movement. It would amount to an attack upon the right to strike.

But what of jurisdictional strikes?

Surely these are the result of an anomolous situation, the battle for supremacy now waged by the C.I.O. and the A. F. of L. That such has to

be the case is deplorable, but for the present it is a fact. And it stands to reason that a healthier solution of the involved situation will be worked out by the contending sides themselves, under the strongly felt, unsympathetic reaction of the public at large, whose attitude labor feels keenly, than by the relatively simple but not necessarily effective device of prohibitive legislation. Americans dislike prohibitions, but left to their own judgment they invariably arrive at a practical way out.

Terror Against The P.O.U.M.

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The possibilities are exhausted. Our Party, in its political aspect, is getting on its feet little by little, but this is not the case when it comes to its financial aspect, though we leave this aspect last for consideration. But the comrades I am referring to must proceed to Paris, where other committees will take care of them. What could be done on behalf of these revolutionary comrades who have risked their lives a thousand and one times for the revolution? We have to go further and intensify our international financial solidarity. At this moment, we need the cooperation of our sympathizers. We want to show these comrades that the Party takes care of them; that is why I'm pleading with you, in order that you should present this appeal to your Party and the Unions. I'm doing it as official representative of the P.O.U.M. We have to make this effort. I'm sure that your comrades will respond immediately to this appeal. The memory of the meeting we had on the eve of our departure from New York, to me unforgettable, makes me believe this.

With revolutionary greetings.