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## Spain Calls for Unity

German warships have bombarded Almeria. Under the fire of heavy guns even the most credulous could not fail to understand the actual meaning of the celebrated “non-intervention.” It means an open merciless war conducted by German and Italian fascism against the Spanish people, against the Spanish republic.

Faced with the ruins of peaceful, unfortified towns, faced with the bodies of killed women and children—to the greater glory of Hitler—all of us must ask ourselves: have we done enough to support the Spanish people in their struggle for liberty, to defend the peace of the peoples against the brute, fascist war?

The factory workers and working people generally in all countries, the millions of honest and progressive people, are on the side of the Spanish people and are rising up in ever greater indignation against the dishonorable, insidious fascist governments which are hurling themselves upon the free people of Spain in order to secure as much booty as possible.

Thousands of the best sons of the international working class are fighting in the ranks of the Spanish people’s army. The workers of all countries are supporting republican Spain materially, with food, clothing and medicaments. The moral and political solidarity displayed by the great Soviet people enabled the Spanish People’s Front to overcome many difficulties in good time. The world proletariat has taken up a resolute stand on the side of the fighting Spanish people. But has this help been enough, are the efforts which have been spent up to now sufficient to achieve victory, liberty and peace in Spain?

No. As long as German warships can bombard Spanish towns with impunity, as long as German pilots can with impunity erase entire villages from the face of the earth, as long as Italian divisions can be dispatched to Spain with impunity, so long must we consider that international solidarity has not been sufficient. As long as even a single soldier of Hitler and Mussolini remains on Spanish soil, the international working class has not yet fulfilled its proletarian, its historic duty. As long as Spanish democracy is not victorious, every class-conscious worker, all parties and organizations of the working class are in duty bound to double and treble their efforts to bring about the victory of Spanish democracy and thereby to safeguard their own liberty and the peace of all nations from the world catastrophe being prepared by the fascists.

Why is it that the action of the international working class in aid of Spain has been insufficient up to the present?

In spite of the fact that the workers of all countries clearly recognize that the struggle on behalf of Spain is a struggle for their own lives, for their own fate; in spite of the fact that the masses of the people in all countries are taking a more and more resolute stand on the side of the Spanish People’s Front, the international working class has not yet been a *united* force in organizing aid for Spain. The split in the working class, the scattered nature of its action, are the most dangerous auxiliary assistance to the tightly closed front of advancing fascism.

The cause of democracy in Spain would long ago have been lost if the Spanish Socialists and Spanish Communists had not in good time set up a united front and had not concluded a firm alliance with all freedom-loving and progressive forces inside the country. The struggle in Spain would have already been won had the workers of all

countries followed the example of their Spanish comrades and closed their ranks in a united international front.

In order to rally all forces against the accursed fascist enemy, our Spanish comrades are more and more persistently demanding this international unity of the working class. While they themselves are consolidating their unity at the battle fronts, they are unable to understand the bureaucratic resistance to the international united front.

After the bombardment of Almeria, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the General Workers' Union of Spain addressed to the Labor and Socialist International, the Communist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions a telegram demanding that these three internationals "take energetic joint action."\*

The Communist International replied immediately. On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, Comrade Dimitroff dispatched a telegram on June 3 to Ramon Lamonedá, José Díaz and Felipe Pretel, in which he declared that the Communist International fully supported the proposal of the Spanish Socialists, Communists and trade unions.

At the same time Comrade Dimitroff made a proposal on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the president of the Labor and Socialist International that a joint contact commission be established of the three internationals with a view to establishing international united action against the intervention of the German and Italian fascists in Spain. Comrade Dimitroff, moreover, added that the Communist International was ready to discuss any proposals made by the Labor and Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions directed towards the defense of the Spanish people.

The president of the Labor and Socialist International, De Brouckere, replied on June 4 that neither the president nor the secretary of the Labor and Socialist International had the necessary powers to take part in a contact commission with the Communist International.

The Communist International was not satisfied with this objection, which countered the urgent demands of the Spanish workers with arguments regarding formal powers, without the trouble even being taken to ask for such powers from the corresponding authorities in the Socialist International.

Comrade Dimitroff replied that if the Labor and Socialist International considered unacceptable the form of contact proposed by the Communist International, then the interests of the common cause of aid to the Spanish people demanded other concrete proposals on the part of the Labor and Socialist International in order to achieve that end. For the Communist International it was not the form that was most important, but the essence of the case. Thereupon Comrade Dimitroff announced that the Communist International, in the interests of hastening on joint action, considered it necessary to bring about an immediate exchange of opinion between the representatives of the Communist International and of the Labor and Socialist International.

After this De Brouckere stated that the Labor and Socialist International was prepared to meet with representatives of the Communist International "for information purposes and to exchange views on the best way of conducting this action, by common agreement wherever possible, without useless friction."

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\* See article, "Correspondence Between the Communist International and Labor and Socialist International" in July issue of *The Communist International*, p. 447.

We welcome this first, though modest step toward an international rapprochement. Up to now the Labor and Socialist International has replied with a refusal to all the attempts of the Communist International to establish international unity of action against fascism and war.

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The history of the heroic anti-fascist struggle of the working class during the last three years is at the same time a history of unceasing attempts to bring about international unity of action and the rallying together of all proletarian and progressive forces against war and fascism.

In October, 1934, the Spanish workers rose up in arms against the attempts of the Lerroux government to establish a fascist regime. In the days when the Asturian miners were shedding their blood in defense of their liberty against the numerically far superior forces of reaction, the Communist International, on October 11, 1934, made the proposal to the Labor and Socialist International to undertake "immediate joint action both to afford support to the fighting Spanish proletariat and to prevent support being given to the Lerroux government by the governments of other capitalist countries."

On October 15 a meeting took place in Brussels of the representatives of the Communist International in the persons of Cachin and Thorez, and the representatives of the Socialist International in the persons of Vandervelde and Adler. The president and secretary of the Labor and Socialist International arrived at the meeting with a previously prepared written declaration in which all joint action on an international scale was rejected.

Vandervelde and Adler declared that they had no powers, that they had only the right to hear the proposals of the Communists but not at all to accept them. They declared that it was too late to conduct joint international action because the struggle in Spain was coming to an end, but that on the other hand it was too early, because it was not known whether the proposal of the Communist International was a simple "maneuver," and it would require long negotiations in order to obtain sufficient "guarantees" for agreement.

That was what the Socialist representatives had to say. When a month later, on November 13, the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International met in Paris, the armed struggle of the Asturian miners had already been crushed. The Labor and Socialist International thereupon decided: "To consider the proposal of the Communist International as having lost actual meaning."

During the Brussels negotiations, Cachin and Thorez, the representatives of the Communist International, limited themselves merely to proposals for international action to aid Spain, in order to obtain a rapid, imperatively necessary and effective agreement, without complicating negotiations with more far-reaching problems. The Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International tried to create the impression that the Communist International was prepared *only* for joint action in aid of Spain and not for more far-reaching international unity.

During the Brussels negotiations, Vandervelde declared:

"We must above all take steps to prepare for the near future and try, in the event of other events taking place, not to be caught unawares as has been the case with us in connection with events in Spain."

Instead of establishing contact with the Communist International and preparing for collaboration in the near future, the leadership of the Labor and Socialist International

replied to the proposal of the Communists with a downright refusal.

The new events which Vandervelde quite rightly foresaw came on in September, 1935. Italian fascism began to provoke an incident in Africa in order to attack Ethiopia and convert it into an Italian colony.

It was now impossible to talk about the Labor and Socialist International being caught unawares: the rapacious fascist war was prepared before the eyes of the whole world, and undoubtedly every possibility existed for rallying all the forces of the working class in good time against Mussolini's war plans.

On September 25, eight days before the beginning of military operations by the fascists against Ethiopia, Comrade Dimitroff dispatched a telegram to the Secretariat of the Labor and Socialist International pointing out that "all that has been done up to now on your part and on ours is still inadequate in face of the menacing danger."

A delegation of the Communist International composed of Cachin, Thorez, Pollitt and Schwarm immediately came together in Paris to establish contact with the Labor and Socialist International. But the leadership of the Labor and Socialist International unfortunately maintained stony silence. On September 27, Friedrich Adler replied that the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International would be reported separately.

On September 28, the Communist delegation approached Adler. The Secretary of the Labor and Socialist International replied that the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International was fully occupied at the moment with the British Labor Party Congress, and that only when it was finished would the Executive Committee be able to reply to Comrade Dimitroff's telegram.

On October 7, Comrade Dimitroff once more appealed on behalf of the Communist International to the Labor and Socialist International. His letter said:

"We proposed the immediate discussion at a joint conference of the representatives of the two Internationals of how best to exert our common efforts to operate the measures for the maintenance of peace outlined by both your and our Internationals. The Secretary of the Labor and Socialist International informed us that the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International would examine our proposal. Up to now, however, we have received no reply from the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International.

"The fact that joint action by the two Internationals was not immediately organized undoubtedly encouraged the fascist warmongers to undertake open military action. Insofar as much has already been neglected, it is all the more the obligation of ourselves and yourselves in the present moment to secure the cessation of military action, and to prevent the war spreading to our countries.... Once again we stress the urgent need for the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International giving a positive answer to our proposal."

On October 13, the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International came together in Brussels. Its reply ran as follows:

"As regards the proposal of the Communist International to arrange a meeting with their four appointed representatives, the Socialist Parties of Great Britain, Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Czechoslovakia declare that they cannot accept this proposal by reason of the composition of the delegation of the Communist International, on the one hand and on the other hand, because they reject all joint action with the Communist Parties of their respective countries and all joint action whatsoever between the two

Internationals. Since the Executive Committee of the Labor and Socialist International has to take account of the opinions of these big working class parties, it is not in a position to accept the invitation of the Communist International.”

The five parties mentioned formed a minority in the Executive Committee of: the Labor and Socialist International, but the majority subordinated themselves to their wish by rejecting the Communist International proposal.

The fact that the world proletariat failed to offer up united resistance to Italian fascism, but left the urge for unity untouched is not the least important reason why Italian fascism was able to win the war in Ethiopia.

After the war in Ethiopia, German and Italian fascism plunged into a new military adventure by attacking democratic Spain. In the summer of 1936 a rebellion began against the Spanish republic, organized by German and Italian fascism. The Communist International immediately appealed to all working class organizations throughout the world, and called upon them to give united support to the Spanish People’s Front, to the Spanish republic. When the rebels advanced upon Madrid and Spanish democracy was passing through the most dangerous moments, the Communist International immediately appealed to the Labor and Socialist International. On October 6, Comrades Cachin and Thorez, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Comintern addressed a proposal for a joint meeting to the president and secretary of the Labor and Socialist International. On October 14, the representatives of the Communist International met De Brouckere and Adler and proposed the calling of an international conference of working class organizations to work out the basis for joint international aid to Spain.

The representatives of the Labor and Socialist International replied that such a conference would be superfluous. At the same time they also rejected a proposal to conduct joint international action in support of the Spanish republic. Adler and De Brouckere declared that they were doing all that needed to be done and that therefore there was no need for international unity.

However, the Spanish workers and anti-fascists were of quite a different opinion. In the face of growing fascist intervention and the outrageous brutalities of the fascists, the Spanish working class organizations—Socialists, Communists, and trade unions—are persistently calling upon all international organizations of the proletariat to undertake united action in defense of the Spanish Republic (in November, 1936, on January 19, 1937, and March 11, 1937).

The Communist International, which places above everything else its proletarian duty of doing everything possible to defend the liberty of the Spanish people and universal peace, has again and again tried to obtain joint international action. The Secretariat of the Labor and Socialist International has at last agreed to meet the representatives of the Communist International. At the time of writing these lines, the meeting had not yet taken place.

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May this meeting not remain fruitless as have been all the previous attempts at negotiations between the representatives of the Communist and Socialist Internationals! The Communist International sets no conditions. The Communist International is prepared to discuss any proposal capable of furthering the cause of unity as a basis for negotiations.

No reasons whatsoever exist to justify the rejection of the proposals put forward by the

Spanish Socialists, Communists and trade union leaders.

For several years the Communists have been without a break conducting a struggle for the united front. Communists are fighting and sacrificing their lives in the struggle for the liberty of the Spanish people. Shoulder to shoulder with the Socialists they are defending the democratic rights of the French people. In all countries they support all measures, however modest, adopted by the Social- Democrats against fascism. In all countries they are indefatigably striving to rally all the forces of the working class against the accursed fascist enemy.

All honest Socialists have become convinced during these years of the sincerity of the Communists, who are pursuing the policy of the united front.

The opponents of the united front have asserted that the united front scares away the petty bourgeoisie and isolates the working class. But wherever the united front has been established, the opposite has taken place: the united front has not only rallied all the forces of the working class, has not only drawn the unorganized into the working class organizations, has not only increased the confidence of the proletariat in their own strength, but has also won over the middle strata to the alliance with the working class, and considerably lessened the attraction of fascism.

The stronger the working class, the more united its action, the more resolutely it throws all its might into the scales, the broader will be the sections of the people which it can gather around itself, and the greater will be its power of attraction for the impoverished peasants and the middle strata. Only the strong and by no means the weak, can win the waverers.

The opponents of the united front have asserted that it was not necessary, that to combine the proletarian forces by no means implies an increase in these forces, that in the majority of countries the Communist Parties have the support of only an insignificant minority of the working class, and that an alliance with this insignificant minority could not change the relation of political forces. The events of the last few years have decisively refuted this assertion. The Communist Party of Spain was a small party, but today it is a factor of great political importance; it has become such a factor not at the expense of the Socialist Party, but thanks to rallying and organizing the hitherto unorganized masses, who have been won over by the advance of the united front, of the antifascist struggle.

The Communist Party of France was long ignored by the Socialists because it had only ten parliamentary deputies. Today the Communist Party of France is a factor of tremendous political importance, while the Socialist Party, thanks to the united front policy, has become the largest party in the government.

The fact that it is wrong to regard unity merely as the arithmetical addition of forces is most clearly illustrated by the example of the French trade unions. The 500,000 and 300,000 workers organized in the respective Confederations of Labor grew into a united trade union army five million strong a year after unity had been achieved.

The international united front, just as the united front on a national scale, would by no means be a simple addition of forces; it would call forth a mighty growth of the proletarian forces in all countries and would bring millions of proletarians into motion who have hitherto remained outside the organizations, aside from politics.

The day we achieve international unity of action will mark a tremendous defeat for fascism in all countries.

All honest Socialists are confronted with a great historic task, to overcome the reactionary resistance to international unity of action, of advantage only to the

bourgeoisie, only to fascism, and to prevent the desires of the British Conservatives and other enemies of the proletariat from getting the upper hand over the will of the fighting Spanish workers, over the will of the overwhelming majority of the working class.

The time has come for all Socialists and Communists, all workers throughout the world, to take a decisive step towards liberating Spain, towards liberating all the peoples of the world from the fascist danger.